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THE TIMES LITERARY SUPPLEMENT

NOVEMBER 20 1981

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The whirling Tory dervish

By Stephen Koss

R. F. FOSTER:

Lord Randolph Churchill
A Political Life

431pp. Clarendon Press: Oxford
University Press. £16.
0 19 822 679 9

In 1874, the twenty-five-year-old Lord Randolph Churchill, third son of the sixth Duke of Marlborough, arrived at Westminster to take his seat for Woodstock. "I heard one of the lower orders, who were there in crowds, say 'there is a rum specimen', evidently alluding to me," he wrote to his newly acquired American wife. "I was so angry and should like to have been an Asiatice king for the moment and executed him summarily." The incident and Churchill's intemperate response were alike symbolic. As a proponent of Tory Democracy, whatever that meant, Lord Randolph ought to have been more tolerant of the man in the street. Though he never became an Asiatice king, surely one of his lesser disappointments, he quickly proved himself the parliamentary equivalent of a whirling dervish.

The coming man who never came, Lord Randolph was indeed "a rum specimen": brazen, impulsive, unprincipled, and unabashedly cynical, yet commended by a refreshing candour and a wayward charm. R. F. Foster, who has portrayed him in this "political life", adeptly illuminates the transcendent weaknesses without discounting the undeniable strengths. For, as the *Pall Mall Gazette* discerned in 1886, Lord Randolph reflected nothing so much as "the permanent ambiguity of his position", partly self-inflicted, but partly dictated by the confines of contemporary political culture. By implication, the other High Politicians of that day - and perhaps any day - were pretty rum specimens too.

Foster's subtitle is doubly apposite. He has distanced himself from the conventional biographical approach to present a personality whose "private life, as his public one, was largely dominated by politics." To underscore this point, each chapter is introduced by an evocative epigraph from a political novel (usually Trollope) and carries the word "politics" in its title: from "Family Politics, 1849-1859" to "Wilderness Politics, 1888 to 1895". As these boundaries would indicate, the treatment takes "a cyclical form", with the early and final stages of Churchill's career "compressed" to allow for more exhaustive ex-aminations of the tumultuous decades in between. The structure is admittedly artificial, as any biographical exercise must be. Nevertheless, it works triumphantly. At last, Lord Randolph, whose previous biographers were determined to iron out his twists and turns, emerges as a three-dimensional figure, credible if not always creditable.

It is Foster's singular achievement to have rescued his subject from the multi-volume sepulchre erected in 1906 by the young Winston Churchill, who wrote with "filial piety" and, when the case required, "unpecked disingenuousness" as well. In an epilogue, which *TLS* readers were able to preview last January, Foster demonstrates the self-serving nature of Winston's poem, which was "at least partially intended as a vindication of the political somersaults being executed by the author at the time of writing." Aided by his illustrious predecessor or simply following the accustomed path of least resistance, a more recent biographer was content to apply a further coat of "biographical varnish, borrowing the texture of previous layers to build up a warm and glowing patina." By contrast, Foster begins afresh. His aim is not to "retrace the ground" littered with shop-worn anecdotes of dubious authenticity, but rather to see Lord Randolph "in the light of contemporary opinion and contemporary practice." This necessitates "trying to

penetrate behind the great formal epic of his son's biography".

The methodology suits the purpose, and possibly fortified it in the process. Foster has devoted "as much attention to the papers of other politicians, and to political journalism, as to the massive and beautifully articulated archives in Churchill College"; in this respect, he has used the unpublished diary of Louisa Harcourt ("that astute juvenile") and the Rothschild bank records to particularly superb advantage. In addition, he has consulted Lord Randolph's speeches as extensively reported in the press "instead of in the form prepared by his publicist and political sidekick", Louis Jennings, "in 1888".

These techniques, with an emphasis upon private as distinguished

anything about this". The legend that Churchill was a popular leader of the House is tellingly disputed, as is the notion that he was naturally sympathetic to the Irish cause. Here, Foster contradicts the view of John Vincent and A. B. Cooke that Churchill, who "knew Ireland at first hand... reflected seriously on Irish questions, showing some willingness to pursue ideal solutions for their own sake and at some personal cost". To the contrary, argues Foster: "What Churchill was actually saying was rarely as pro-Irish as it seemed to be, though he asserted himself an Irish expert and referred on every possible occasion to a first-hand knowledge of the country."

Paternal admonitions were a family tradition among the Churchills. Randolph, who was later to write



Lord Randolph Churchill at the India Office

from public testimony and a focus upon partisan activity within a rarefied arena, signal Foster's affiliation with the school of High Politics, which has done so much to challenge state assumptions. Founded at Cambridge in the 1960s, the school now boasts a thriving branch at Bristol. To be sure, its members subscribe to no uniform curriculum: they are far too talented and too idiosyncratic besides. Their common denominator is an impatience with interpretations that hinge on ideology, which they see as invariably subordinate to forces of personal ambition. Some of them, one may infer from their pronouncements in books and reviews, would take exception to the extent to which Foster has relied on newspaper comment. Maurice Cowling, the doyen, has in fact questioned the utility of biography as an analytical tool: "It abstracts a man whose public action should not be abstracted. It implies linear connections between one situation and the next."

Undaunted, Foster has written the sort of biography to warm Cowling's heart or, failing that, to give him pause for reflection. Lord Randolph Churchill emerges from these crowded pages as the prototypical High Politician, who proclaimed to a hushed dinner-party: "What brings men to the front is much more opportunity than character." He exploited issues, colleagues, and family to gain position, and he owed his ultimate failure not to lack of driving power but certainly not to want of opportunism - but to a series of tactical miscalculations. It would have flattered him to know that Gladstone admired his "nimble-mindedness", but concluded that "he has not a single grain of conviction in him except in the abstract". Similarly, he would have been delighted with the tone and thrust of Foster's book.

Written with astringency, but never acerbity, this "political life" permits Churchill to speak chillingly for himself. "Balticism is played out and the time is come for a 'generous policy'." He insisted in 1889, soon after he had instructed a confidante that "compulsiveness and generosity are the signs of a political fool". His outrage over Bradlaugh's godlessness was belied by a confession to his wife that he considered "all religious differences senseless... don't say

such wounding ones to Winston, was soundly rebuked by his own father: As you get older you will find yourself, if you do not control your tongue, always quarrelling, unpopular and with few friends... To tell you the truth I fear that you yourself are very impatient and resentful of any control; and while you stand upon some fancied right or injury, you fail to perceive what is your duty and allow both your language and manner a very improper scope.

Lord Salisbury could not have put it better.

As an undergraduate at Oxford, Randolph showed an aptitude for chess, which his wife was to see replicated in his political moves. He did a great deal of hunting and an amount of drunken "roystering", before he began to cultivate the electors at nearby Woodstock, just outside the dual gates. In 1873, after a three-day courtship, he married Jennie Jerome, a nineteen-year-old heiress, whose beauty was more tangible than her dowry. He anticipated "a peaceful happy life with no particular occupation", but she thought otherwise: "I should like you to be as ambitious as you are clever, and I am sure you would accomplish great things." Given that Churchill was too clever by half, his ambition defied measurement.

"If the most important thing about Lord Randolph Churchill's background is that it was dual", Foster observes, "the second most important thing is that it was impossible." With his wife beside him on the platform, he had the effrontery to denounce the Parnellite reliance on "Yankee gold". To ease his financial embarrassments, he hoped for a junior appointment from Disraeli, who did not oblige him. In attacking Bradlaugh, Churchill may well have had a "personal interest" beyond theology, in that Bradlaugh inveighed against the system of state pensions that paid successive dukes of Marlborough £4,000 a year. "Health and money, the twin themes that dominated Churchill's personal life even more than that of most people, were... inextricably mixed." By the mid-1880s, "the world of Trollope, never far from Churchill", had shifted from *Phineas Finn* to *The Way We Live Now*, a

crucial factor being "the importance of an official salary". Denied one, Churchill embarked on reckless speculations and a "roving commission" for the *Daily Graphic*. In spite of occasional antisemitic gibes, the friendship of Jewish financiers was indispensable to him. In 1888, he "turned for everything" to Rothschild, to whom he owed £66,000 when he died.

Rothschild, much less Randolph's debt to him, received no mention in the index to Winston Churchill's biography. There was yet another subject on which Winston was still more reticent. From March to October 1882, Randolph was incapacitated by "a mysterious illness... which eventually, in the form of General Paralysis brought on by syphilis, finished his career". Winston glossed over the early breakdown and melodramatized beyond recognition the circumstances of his father's death. His own son, sixty years later, persisted in mourning Lord Randolph as the tragic victim of a "severe mental disease". Qualified historians have been equally oblique or sententious. Henry Pelling, for example, reveals only that "the nature of Randolph's illness, once it was diagnosed, was such that he could no longer claim his 'moral rights' leaving Lady Randolph to look elsewhere. But the facts are clear enough, however awkward it might be that Frank Harris first divulged them.

Before 1882, Churchill's "priority was to make a figure". After illness struck, "insubordination turned into a coherent effort to supplant his leaders and parliamentary jockeying turned to a distaste for what he had come to see as timewasting at Westminster". Churchill, who memorably quipped that Gladstone was an old man in a hurry, was himself a younger man driven by the same furies of debility and mortality. In his accelerating race against time, he might be classified as belonging to his own side. But, then, which side was he on? As depicted in the cartoon which adorns the book's dust-jacket, Lord Randolph jauntily straddled the fence, his feet dangling in the air.

His boon companions included Labouchere and Dilke, Hyndman ("the Marxist man-about-town"), and Wilfrid Scavenius Blunt. Among the journalists who thrilled to his "genius for vulgarization" were Borthwick of the *Morning Post*, Henry Lucy (who puffed him in the *Observer*, the *Daily News*, and the *Punch*, only to be "deliberately cut" in retaliation for an article he did not write), the garrulous T.H.S. Escott, and, up to a point, John Morley, E. T. Cook, and Cheney of the *Times*. From his mother, whose maxim was "feed the press", he had learnt the value of newspaper. "No politician of the century since the days of Mr. Milner Gibson studied newspapers, whether published in London or in the country," with the same catholicity and care as Churchill," declared Escott. These efforts paid dividends in the case of the Fourth Party: largely a creation of the publicists, it "embodied nothing but a negative", according to Lord Rosebery, and - on both counts - may be said to have set the pattern for fourth parties down to the present.

In Lord Salisbury's first administration, Churchill served as Secretary of State for India. Morley was not alone in suspecting that the Prime Minister had "selected the India Office for his irrepressible colleague merely in order to intern him where he can do little or no mischief". (Did Campbell-Bannerman "later" send Morley to that "golden pagoda" for the same purpose?). Although Blunt predicted "a great future for any statesman who will preach Tory Democracy in India", Churchill reverted to the coercive and expansionist policies of Lord Lytton. His disparagement of Indian spokesmen as "Bengalee Baboos" foreshadowed

Peter Brent

CHARLES
DARWIN

'A Man of Enlarged
Curiosity'

"... Mr Brent's work... is exhaustive. The biographer has not only mastered the various disciplines that Darwin used but has made himself thoroughly at home in the wider context of mid-Victorian thought."
The Spectator

Peter Lewis

GEORGE ORWELL

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Arthur Koestler

Ronald Duncan

COLLECTED
POEMS

1929-1980

Walter Allen

AS I WALKED
DOWN NEW
GRUB STREET

Memories of a
Writing Life

Clare's

Countryside

Selected and introduced
by Brian Patten

Illustrated by
Ann Arnold

Heinemann

compositions, the most perfect in plan". Admittedly, perfection of plan has its limitations, in a long poem of any kind, but there is in Tasso a sense of movement and direction towards the end which must have been helpful to the translator. Moreover Fairfax seems, on such evidence as we have, to have been an unpretentious man, and if like all translators he sometimes departs a little from his original, it is rarely in order to present the reader with something he thinks will be more impressive. While Spenserians such as Giles and Phineas Fletcher were going a way which lost itself in the sand, Fairfax hit one of the trails the language of his time was taking, towards a certain thinness, no doubt, but also towards a certain elegance, so that one can understand how it was that, as Dryden reports, "our famous Walter" owned that "the devil'd the harmony of his numbers from *Godfrey of Bulloigne*, which was turned into English by Mr Fairfax".

There is plenty of neatness in Fairfax, of a kind which increased in English until it was overdone: Thus women know, and they use the guise, Tenchment the valiant, and beguile the wise.

But there is no great air of contrivance about most of the verses. "One would expect an epic to maintain a lofty level of style throughout," say the present editors, apparently without repugnance. "Tasso maintains such a level, Fairfax does not." The contemporary English reader is unlikely to complain. The translation holds our interest; and this is the first requisite in a long poem. It would be wrong to suggest that Fairfax has any exceptional powers of invention, but he gets the sense of the Italian into lively and convincing English:

To all deceit she could her beauty frame,
False, faire and yong, a virgin and a witch
stands for Tasso's:
gli accorgimenti e le più occulte frodi
ch'usi o femina o maga a lei son note.

Fairfax can manage his stanza admirably and present a traditional topic with freshness and effect:

So, in the passing of a day, doth pass
The bud and blossom of the life of men,
Nor ere doth flourish more, but like the grass
Cut downe, becommeth withred, pale and wan:

O gather then the rose while time thou has,
Short is the day, done when it scant began.
Gather the rose of love, while yet thou hast
Loving, the love'st, embracing, he embrest.

The English language at the turn of the sixteenth/seventeenth centuries was in a happy condition, and Fairfax had the gift of it. The editors, besides presenting us with a carefully prepared text of *Godfrey*, have usefully included what remains of Fairfax's original poems: if there is not great force, there is charm in his "Epitaph upon King James" (presumably written more than a quarter of a century after the translation):

All that have eyes now wake and weep;
He whose waking our sleep was,
Is fallen asleep himself, and never
Shall wake more till he wake ever.
Death's iron hand has closed those eyes
That were at once three kingdoms' spies.

Tasso's matter was entirely suitable to be made at home in Jacobean and Caroline England, and Fairfax did make it at home, which is surely the most a translator can be expected to do. The theme is an echo of older European concerns, distanced already in the Italian. For what was the First Crusade then in *ferarra*? A dim recollection recalled by the battle of Lepanto (1571), or the anxieties raised by the fall of Constantinople (1453)? There is no realism in Tasso, as regards the nature of the enemy, and little in relation to other outward matters, for this is a world of sorcerers, maiden warriors, and other colourful paraphernalia. But the inward seriousness of the poem is not in doubt. If we treat with reserve the detail of the alleged allegory, there is still no question but that the work as a whole gives us the elements at war in the poet's grave and highly cultivated mind. The cause matters: beyond the taking of Jerusalem, a Christian salvation. Tancréd says:

But heare me in this joial towne, I pray,
I die, there may I see my latest day,
The place where Christ upon his crose was rent.

That if cut short by humane accident
I die, there may I see my latest day,
The place where Christ upon his crose was rent.

(for Tasso's "loco ove morì l'Uomo immortale"). In Fairfax's rendering we have the very stuff of seventeenth-century religious apprehension, from Donne to Bunyan.

The enemy, for the Counter-Reformation, was rather Protestantism, as far as the English Puritans were concerned. The Whore of Babylon, and it is this unimpressive struggle which is caught up in Tasso's epic, for if he had "read about Jerusalem", he had seen the Counter-Reformation at closer quarters. How little any poet – or perhaps anyone else – gets beyond his time! There is no doubt more of the impetus which inspired the First Crusade in *La Chanson de Roland* than there is in the *Gerusalemme Liberata*, of which it is the nominal subject. *Roland* was probably composed about the time of Godfrey's capture of Jerusalem, and it falsifies its own nominal subject, the Pyrenean campaign of Charlemagne, to a tale of imperial Christian armies wiping the floor with the Saracens. There is no end to the sleight-of-hand of poets, or to human misunderstanding.

Who's Who in Shakespeare's England by Alan and Veronica Palmer has recently been published (280pp. Brighton: Harvester Press. £30.00 85527 718 1). From the years 1590-1623 the authors have selected more than 700 men and women whose influence at national and local level offers insights into Shakespeare's plays and the background against which they were written, including not only actors, writers and patrons but also public figures of the age, but also Stratford-upon-Avon and Warwickshire notables. The biographies are preceded by a classified list of entries in which the subjects are divided according to occupation and the volume also contains a number of black-and-white illustrations of its subjects.



Francis Picabia

During his lifetime the Paris-born painter Francis Picabia (1879-1953) was associated with many of the more significant movements in twentieth-century art, including Cubism, Dadaism and Surrealism. The naturalistic *Le Malador* (above) was painted c. 1941 at Golfe-Juan in the south of France, and will come up for sale at Christie's auction of Impressionist and Modern Paintings, Drawings and Sculptures to be held on Tuesday, December 1, 1981 at 11am at 8 King Street, St James's, London SW1.

Pithy and playful

By James Kirkup

SŌIKU SHIGEMATSU:

A Zen Forest: Sayings of the Masters Foreword by Gary Snyder
175pp. New York/Tokyo: Weatherhill. \$15.95.
0 8348 0159 0

"A word is a finger that points at the moon," writes Zen priest Sōiku Shigematsu in his eloquent introduction to this unusual and entertaining book. He tells us that Zen students should aim for the moon, not for the finger pointing at it, which is merely an accessory to enlightenment. In Japan the gesture of pointing with the forefinger of the right hand is so much more intense and vital than in the West, because in Japan one learns to point at something by holding the hand vertically, not (as in the West) horizontally; this extends the pointing finger and the pointing gesture in one fluid line that runs across the heel of the thumb, along the top of the hand, along the outstretched arm into the shoulder and down into the entire body, so that it is not just a trivial forefinger but the entire being that is pointing. When a Japanese points at something, he is not just indicating an object, but identifying his whole being with it.

Sōiku Shigematsu is a Zen priest at Shōgenji Temple at Shimizu in Shizuoka Prefecture, and also a Professor of English at Shizuoka University. He is firmly in the tradition of intellectual yet mindless Zen priests. His maddening yet clarifying book is a translation of quintessential sayings of Zen masters, used to provoke illumination in students and monks. The sayings are often de-routinized, absurd (apparently), hermetic or simply astonishingly poetic in a surreal way. These pithy one-liners have been handed down over the centuries by Chinese and Japanese Zen masters, and are an exquisite distillation of the most unpedantic wisdom ever known, an absolutely unavoidable savor from the foundations of Zen Buddhist philosophy known as "koans". The most famous of these, in our solemn Western world, is the very simple one: for beginners: "What is the sound of one hand clapping?" (here expressed simply and most effectively as a statement, not a question: "One-handed clapping"). In this properly upsetting book, we find over 1,200 of these densely con-

tracted (sometimes almost to the point of invisibility), comic, profound and playfully mystifying sayings.

Anything less like Christian parables and apophthegms would be hard to imagine. The Zen Buddhists show their respect for divinities and saints by treating them often with boisterous, irreverent (and, indeed, somewhat blasphemous) familiarity, in the manner of the medieval mystery plays. Here is a fairly mild example:

Chop
Vairocana's head off!
Ignore
Buddha-and-Patriarchal

A notorious preoccupation of the medieval schoolmen is expressed thus:

Turn
a somersault
on a needle point.

Indeed, the somersault is a symbol of enlightenment, as in:

A void sky turns
a somersault.

And there are astonishing re-evaluations of the obvious:

The water a cow laps
turns into milk;
the water a snake licks
changes into poison.

This seems to be the equivalent of St Matthew's miraculous insight: "Be ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves."

Zen can be the best kind of therapy:

Censeless
worries
of my mind:
One evening's
talk

unburdens it.

As in all Japanese short poems, the seasons play a regulating role in the quest for *satori*:

Falling snow bridges
the sides of the gorge;
mist hides and discloses
the mountain hut.

And the Zenogry returns again, in:

Hill Hill Hill!
— with a lump of snow.

This reminds me of seeing schoolboys at Matsushima pelting a Buddha with snowballs – their own way of worshipping him, and one he was pleased to accept.

Another saying instructs us:

The ordinary and the sacred
live together.

And:
Once you preach,
the pole

is gone –
a motto some of our ministers of religion and self-appointed moralists would do well to remember.

In an illuminating foreword, the American poet Gary Snyder, who knows Japan and Zen so well, makes some pertinent comparisons between these sayings and their equivalents in the culture of the Mohave Indians, as well as in Bantu riddles, and some remarkable Alaskan Yukon, Samoan, Hawaiian and good old homely Kentuckian expectations. I particularly like his example from the Philippines:

The house owner was caught:
the house escaped
through the window.

(answer: a fish net)

I, too, am reminded of koans in other cultures: the Tyneside koan of my childhood that goes, "You're a nice lad, Jimmy, but yer muck stinks." Cocteau's "Nothing reflects less than a mirror" can be found mirrored in this volume's

The two mirrors
reflect each other.

Shigematsu's book has been sensitively translated with the help of Claran Murray, and is adorned by the vigorous calligraphies of Priest Shigematsu's abbot, Kūjo Shigematsu, who is also his father and teacher. A Zen follower, Gyokusen, has contributed her own lively interpretations of the Ten Oxherding Pictures, which I first encountered nearly twenty years ago in Daisetz Suzuki's *Manual of Zen Buddhism*, and the originals of which (the Kaku-an versions) are in Shokokuji Temple, Kyoto.

Like all Weatherhill publications, this book is beautifully printed and produced: just to take it up in one's hands is enough to persuade one that illumination is very near. There is a very useful appendix listing all the sayings in alphabetical order in both Japanese and romanized form. There is a map of China and a helpful accompanying glossary with a bibliographical note of previous editions, anthologies and translations. For all lovers of Zen, and of peculiar Japanese wit and Chinese puzzles, this will always be an essential work. It should be placed in the hands of every bishop and archbishop in the Christian church, for they will find in it much to support ecclesiastical advances:

The sacred tortoise
clumps over the land:
How can it escape
a trail to the dirt?

A highly popular murder

By Philip Collins

ALBERT BOROWITZ:

The Woman who Murdered Black Satin
The Bermondsey Horror
337pp. Columbus: Ohio State University Press. \$17.50.
0 8142 0320 5

What Dickens best liked to talk about, said his colleague George Augustus Sala, "was the latest new piece at the theatres, the latest exciting trial or police case, the latest social craze or social swindle, and especially the latest murder and the newest thing in ghosts". So we might have expected that when Tennyson sat up into the small hours with the Master of Bullioli, Benjamin Jowett, it was to swap yarns about murder. "He seems rather to revel in such descriptions – one would not guess it from his poetry," observed "Lewis Carroll" after another Tennysonian disquisition on the subject. Nor perhaps would one guess from Henry James's novels that he was another devotee of the dear old human and social murders – in which we are so agreeably at home," as he put it to a fellow-addict.

Many Victorians, of all classes, revelled in murder, with less pretence about their ghoulishness than later generations have affected. *The Times* and the *Annual Register* gave generous space to the topic, which was, more predictably, the great stand-by of street broadsheets and low Sunday newspapers. Recall, from *Great Expectations*, Mr Wopsle reading the newspaper to the patrons of the Three Jolly Bargemen:

A highly popular murder has been committed, and Mr Wopsle was inured in blood to the eyebrows. He gloated over every abhorrent adjective in the description, . . . he faintly moaned "I am done for," as the victim, and he barbarously bellowed, "I'll serve you out," as the murderer . . . He enjoyed himself thoroughly, and we all enjoyed ourselves.

"I do not like accidents, there is no meaning in them," remarks a mild lady in another novel of the 1860s:

"but," she added confidentially, "I dearly like a murder. Of course I do not wish for murders," she continued, in a tone of resigned virtue; "but when there is one, why, I like it. It is human nature."

If not human nature, it certainly seems to come naturally to the British in the newspaper age. Robin Robbins, noticing overnight books on the Yorkshire Ripper in the *TLS* recently, remarked that "Many people eagerly enjoy the killing of their fellow-beings" though "social propriety demands" – now if not in the previous century – "a veil of pretext". The victim, he suggested, must be "different" in some way – foreign or black or gay or female or "no better than they should be". Patrick O'Connor, the victim in the "highly popular murder" in *Bermondsey* in 1849 which is the subject of Albert Borowitz's book, was Irish but otherwise failed to meet Mr Robbins's specifications.

It wasn't a stylish murder, either, nor was the new Detective Department at Scotland Yard, established seven years earlier, severely tested in solving the case. When a man is missing and his corpse is soon found, sayings in alphabetical order in both Japanese and romanized form. There is a map of China and a helpful accompanying glossary with a bibliographical note of previous editions, anthologies and translations. For all lovers of Zen, and of peculiar Japanese wit and Chinese puzzles, this will always be an essential work. It should be placed in the hands of every bishop and archbishop in the Christian church, for they will find in it much to support ecclesiastical advances:

The sacred tortoise
clumps over the land:
How can it escape
a trail to the dirt?

Jane Welsh Carlyle reported at the time, "the General Public has talked of little else" was that the murderers – quickly apprehended, charged and hanged – put up a splendid performance. And it was a good plot, in the fictional rather than the forensic sense, with a pleasantly topical aspect, too. One motive for the crime, perhaps the only substantial motive – though an agreeable if indistinct whiff of adultery, jealousy and revenge also hung over the episode – was that O'Connor was a man of considerable though declining assets.

In 1849, the railway-mania of the past decade was being badly jolted. As a *Times* leading article on the Bermondsey case remarked: "That no happy characteristic or timely adornment might be wanting to the deed, the scrip and shares of familiar railway lines are mixed with the transaction." Mrs Manning made haste to slay her man, and realise, since the market was falling. Certainly Mrs Manning's lodger had been bundled out of the house very hurriedly, shortly before her kitchen became the last resting-place of another paying guest. The extruded lodger was a medical student, doubtless getting used to laymen's curiosity about medical matters; but in the circumstances now revealed there did seem something sinister about his landlord's inquiry. "Which part of the skull is most dangerous to injure?" The lodger also found good reason to remember some emphatic advice from Mrs Manning's husband: "For God's sake never marry a foreigner. She will be the ruin of you."

Patrick O'Connor, an unpleasant and dishonest man, was no saintly Duncan, but the Mannings reminded everybody of the Macheths. She seemed much the more resolute and capable of the two; as her defending counsel, Sergeant Ballantine, reminded, "Although she was my client, I suspect she was the power that really originated the deed of blood". Moreover, O'Connor, like Duncan, was a guest. He had been invited to dinner, and was persuaded to go downstairs into the fatal kitchen, where his grave already awaited him, to wash his hands, because (he was told) "a very particular young lady" was also coming to dinner. *The Times* elaborated on the *Macheth* analogy in its leading article on the Mannings' execution – this little slice of life neatly proved "how truly Shakespeare could describe, and how little he exaggerated" – though Shakespeare's were "not the only pages illustrated from the native horrors of a little street in the lowest of our suburbs. It is Ahab and Jeezebel to the life: Jeezebel the daring foreigner, the profane unbeliever, as Maria Manning now seems to have been."

Part of Ballantine's defence of Maria Manning was that she had been O'Connor's mistress, and that it was her husband, belatedly over come by "a paroxysm of jealousy", who had planned and carried out the murder. The fact that she was Swiss by birth added spice to the story and provided perfect verification of the widespread suspicion that Continental women were sadly different from their English counterparts. As a reviewer of *Black House* (serialized four years later) commented: "Few readers formed any other conclusion than that Mr Dickens was working up to the trial of Horstmann (so Horstmann in many particulars)." Horstmann shoots Mr Tullkington for what may seem inadequate motives except that she is French – an "indiscreet foreigner", remarks Esther Summerson. As the notable French Dickensian Sylvère Monod has dryly observed, Horstmann is "murdering Tullkington was 'presumably yielding to the impulsive vindictiveness of her nature'".

Another stereotype to which the Mannings conformed was that of Beauty and the Beast. Frederick Manning, as one contemporary recorded, was "altogether repulsive" in appearance – unforgotten for "bull-headed, thick-necked," and so flabby that the folds of fat ringing his jaw

looked "more like swellings than natural formations". Maria's beauty, by contrast, was so much bruited in press reports that *The Times* was moved to protest that her features were neither regular nor feminine: the furthest its reporter would go was that she evidently had once been "comely", but now looked at least five or six years older than the twenty-eight to which she admitted.

Certainly, however, she was a neat dresser, and every detail of the costumes she wore on her various public appearances was minutely reported. She had worked, too, in aristocratic households as a lady's-maid, most recently to Lady Blantyre, daughter of the great hostess the Duchess of Sutherland. This association with high places provided a boost to her status as popular heroine, which was further enhanced by the dramatic irony of the letters of recommendation from "two distinguished personages" found in her luggage when she was captured. In them, she is described as being "kind, affectionate and piously inclined". Also in her boxes were several sacred volumes, such as *Family Devotion for Every Day in the Year*, though, as *The Times* had remarked, some evidence suggested that she was a "profane unbeliever". The prison chaplains had found her stony ground, while the chastened Manning, whose latter days were full of pious gestures, claimed that when he had asked her what would become of her soul if she committed murder, she had answered, "We have no soul; after we are dead we are like a lump of clay, and there is no thought of us". Here, manifestly, the script leaves *Macheth* for the *Jago* of Verdi's *Otello*, whom Maria, if correctly reported, enterprisingly anticipates by nearly thirty years:

Vien dopo tutto irrisol la Morie.
E poi E poi! La morte è il Nulla.
E vecchia Fola il Ciel.

Manning himself never matched this spectacular dramatic standard; he was merely a former railway guard, sacked under suspicion of being involved in a bullion theft. Nor was he a nasty dresser. Perhaps he just had the useful instinct that he simply had to play the Beast to her Beauty. Maria took inordinate care about her turn-out while in gaol, even making a new pair of drawers for her grand finale, when she also insisted on silk stockings and other such niceties. Dickens's friend John Forster, who that day shared with him a language roof with a view, wrote to the luckless Bulwer Lytton, who had missed the spectacle (and connoisseur hangings are excessively rare):

You should have seen this woman ascend the drop, blindfold, and with a black lace veil over her face – with a step as firm as if she had been walking to a feast. She was beautifully dressed, every part of her noble figure finely and fully expressed by close fitting black satin, spotless white collar . . . and gloves on her manicured hands.

How, one might wonder, did Forster know about that manicure? But, as will appear, he had access to yet more intimate details. Not alone in his "heroine-worship" (which he acknowledged), he reports that the doctor who later examined the murderer's body said: "he had never seen so beautiful a figure" – as Maria's, of course: poor Fred, whose swinging corpse was "a filthy shapeless scarecrow" beside "her graceful aspect", excited no such attention – and the doctor even "compared her feet to those of a marble statue". Some local magistrates also enjoyed the privilege of viewing this memorable corpse. Maria's big day was marred, however, by its coming at the wrong time of the month for her. Not wanting to disgrace herself, she had, reported her omniscient admirer Forster, "obtained a clean napkin out ten minutes before the drop".

Male victims of the hangman are said to experience, if all too briefly to enjoy, an erection as they drop. Forster's excitement about Maria's

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noble and "fully expressed" figure and about the sanitary engineering underneath that beautiful dress, suggests that Manning may not have been alone in his momentary gratification. Many "high and influential" personages, moreover, felt an urgent need to pay their last respects to her interesting cadaver, it was reported, but were turned away by the Governor of the Horsemen Lane Gaol, who nevertheless graciously those local magistrates, prudently remembering, perhaps, on which county boundary's side his future bread might be buttered. At least one official, however, had not enjoyed the day: the hangman, Calcraft, had never wanted to hang a husband and wife together and, in the event, "did not much like it".

Just before this final farewell performance Marin had been reconciled with her husband. After the murder, and the selling-up of their furniture, they had fled in opposite directions, she taking most of the loot to Edinburgh and he sailing to the Channel Islands to drown his well-justified apprehensions in brandy. Both had inefficiently taken care, and the cab-les were able to point the police in the right direction. The public, agog for their capture, was thrilled when their descriptions were wired on the new electric telegraph, to points north and south, and leader-writers were ecstatic about the efficiency of this new scientific dimension in the war against crime. After their capture the Mannings provided further excellent entertainment by trying to get each other hanged, though Maria made a feeble attempt to invent a young man from Guernsey who, she claimed, had acted in concert with Manning in carrying out the murder. Manning, more communicative than his wife, gave the authorities various lengthy accounts of O'Connor's death, in which Maria was to blame (a line of defence stigmatized at the time as being very unmanly). In his condemned-cell confession, however, he admitted to having given the *coup de grâce*: "he moaned, and I never liked him very well, and I battered

in his skull with a ripping chisel". This memorably laconic statement was much the best of Manning's lines in the drama, Maria maintained her standard while awaiting death. "Damn seize you all" was her favourite form of address to her gaolers. "Base and shameful England!" she had exclaimed on being found guilty, throwing the court rue at the lawyers. "Then she is no lady" was her comment on the Queen's refusing to grant a reprieve.

Mr Borowitz's is the first full-length study of this enduringly popular murder - the Mannings held their place in the Chamber of Horrors until 1971, and may still be seen in the Tussauds storehouse at Woking. He tells his tale well. He ends with the curious irony that had Maria been Manning's mistress rather than O'Connor's, she might well have escaped the gallows. Her lawyers tried to obtain a separate trial for her under an ancient law allowing foreign defendants to demand a jury half of whom spoke their language, but, unluckily for her, a law had been passed the previous year conferring British citizenship on any foreign-born woman married to a Briton. Borowitz sees Manning as the guilty party, and argues that, on the evidence that would have been available at a separate trial, Maria would not have been convicted.

He offers a good account, too, of the controversy caused by Dickens's two famous letters to *The Times* arguing for private executions: the huge crowd had behaved in a degradingly ribald and profligate manner. (A minor controversy also ran on the *Times* correspondence page about the etiquette for more genteel members of execution audiences: was it right and decent to use opera-glasses, or was that going too far?) One touch missing from his narrative is the awareness shown by Richard Altick in his *Victorian Studies in Scarlet* (an admirable book about murder-mania to which I owe some of my quotations above) that

the minuteness of the recorded evidence at trials for murder provides a unique source for social historians about the trivia of daily life - for instance, in this case, that O'Connor kept the key of his tea-caddy on his key-ring.

Dickens's four letters to the *Daily News* about capital punishment should be five (see *TLS*, August 12, 1965). Otherwise I noted no error - except the title. *The Woman who Murdered Black Satin*. Most sources, including the *DNB* entry on Maria, report that her choice of black satin for her final appearance made the material unfashionable for many years thereafter. Borowitz argues convincingly, however, on the evidence of fashion reports and haberdashers' advertisements, that this is untrue. It seems a pity, then, that he should have retained an eye-catching title at the expense of accuracy. Maria, however, inevitably inspired such myths.

Another, unmentioned by Mr Borowitz, is the editor of *Punch's* telling his Table colleagues, in the 1860s, how Charles Field the detective "with his flabby hand and cool tongue" had "traced Mrs Manning to a lodging, and tapped at door 'Only me - Charley Field - as just open the door quietly, Minnie'". As Inspector Field was recognizably Dickens's Inspector Bucket, who arrests Horsetense, this would indeed have been an intriguing additional link between *Black House* and the Manning case. But, though Field was involved in the investigations, Maria was in fact arrested by an Edinburgh policeman. With her high sense of the appropriate, she would doubtless much have preferred it to have been the more illustrious man from Scotland Yard.

In *Rule Britannia* (246pp. Routledge and Kegan Paul, £8.95 0 7100 0774) Peter Padmore offers a "sample in depth" of the Victorian and Edwardian era, at a time when, according to a French strategist, the sea, for England, was "a territory, a British territory of course".

The shock of cold water

By J. P. Kenyon

HUGH LLOYD-JONES, VALERIE PEARL and BLAIR WORDEN (Editors)
History and Imagination
Essays in honour of H. R. Trevor-Roper
396pp. Duckworth, £25.
0 7136 1570 X

This is a Festschrift of consistently high quality, as befits its recipient, who is one of our most distinguished living historians. Hugh Trevor-Roper's output, in terms of crude bulk, has never been large - and it is a source of regret to his admirers that it shows no signs of becoming much larger - but it has been of a quite unusual quality, and it has covered an unusual range: all the way from Hitler's Berlin to Justinian's Constantinople. His scholarship in his preferred fields - the seventeenth century and the mid-twentieth - is immaculate and at times intimidating, and in other areas it is best described as "breezy", as in his rum-bustious Border raids into Scotland, one of his mail contributions to his historical thinking lies in his capacity to illumine a period not his own by dropping down into it new shafts of imaginative insight. His metaphorical description of the best kind of research is significant: "The water must be fresh, cold and stimulating; it must flow from outside sources, and its impact must be perceptible, causing sudden shock, gradual adjustment, and the pleasant gurgle of controversy."

It may be that at times he has been mischievous for mischief's sake, and he is certainly one of the most youthful of our modern Nestors, but even in his trivialities he is sustained by one of the best prose styles of any historian writing today. As Hugh Lloyd-Jones says in his preface, he "writes not in sentences but in periods" and "few living authors have a more felicitous ear for the rhythms of the language". Not surprisingly, he is one of the most aggressive defenders of the Book of Common Prayer against the inanities of the new Alternative Service Book. It is good news that he has now embarked on a second academic career, at Cambridge, just as his first, at Oxford, was drawing to a close. It is a shame that modern contracts of employment will not allow him to emulate the feats of Sir Adolphus William Ward, another modern historian, who retired as Principal of Owens College, Manchester, in 1927, only to be elected Master of Peterhouse in 1930 and to die in office in 1924.

None of the contributors to this volume display his qualities, but it would be an unfair and unfair requirement that in the circumstances they should. Their function is to stand up and be counted, each holding a tribute of pure research, as at some harvest festival. And scholars from across the world have gathered for the occasion; America is well represented, as is Oxford, of course; Fernand Braudel has sent something from Paris, and I even notice two contributions from Cambridge (though one is from a new arrival there).

Richard Cobb, in an essay on "Thermidor or the Retreat from Fantasy", no doubt intended to be scintillating, comes nearest to the exploration of broad, general themes in an unbuttoned, or perhaps rather overblown, does give the suggestion of a rather undisciplined distinction. Michael Howard, Trevor-Roper's successor in the Regius chair at Oxford, offers an elegant and perceptive study of "Empire, Race and War in pre-1914 Britain". Kevin Sharpe is useful on "Archbishop Laud and the University of Oxford", an essay which has deeper implications than its title would suggest. Other contributions, as is not unusual, seem to be chips hacked from a larger sculpture, and some seem hampered by the restrictions imposed by the need to cram twenty-four essays into one not very large volume; for instance, I would have

liked to have heard much more from Valerie Pearl on "Social Policy in Early Modern London", and I am sure she would have been able and willing to provide it. Even so, some of Trevor-Roper's younger pupils have been left off, it seems; Jeremy Cater's entertaining vignette of "General Oughton versus Edinburgh's Enlightenment" would have been well balanced by something on Ireland from T. C. Barnard.

Nor have many contributors heeded the master's own exhortations. In his inaugural lecture at Oxford in 1957, which prefaces this volume, Trevor-Roper said, "History that is not useful, that has not some lay appeal, is mere antiquarianism; history that is not controversial is dead history." It would be asking too much, perhaps, for a volume of this nature to have wide popular appeal, and its utility is mainly for the profession, but it is not unfair to say that it is curiously bland. In the background sometimes - as in Geoffrey Elton's "Arthur Hall, Lord Burghley and the Antiquity of Parliament" - a keen ear can detect "the pleasant gurgle of controversy", but there are no "sudden shocks". Moreover, only two contributors have followed up his suggestion, in the valedictory lecture which forms an epilogue to the volume, of the comparative value of imaginary alternative histories. Braudel discusses why the Reformation was not fully accepted in France, and by implication explores what might have happened if it had been. Similarly, in "The Year of the Three Ambassadors", John Elliott considers the consequences for the Long Parliament if Charles I had been in a position to respond to Spain's overtures in 1640.

But in any case it was a mistake to include two of Trevor-Roper's own lectures. Neither of them has the air of being particularly well digested, and the occasions on which they were delivered did not call for profundity, yet in range of thought and distinction of style they are streets ahead of most of the essays sandwiched between them; indeed, of some they seem to make a gentle mockery. I would rather have seen them embodied in a new collection of his own. It is fourteen years since he published the last such collection, *Religion, the Reformation and Social Change*, and those who seek the best of his work since then must grub around in the less frequented stacks of a major library.

For instance, an expensive and now scarce Festschrift for Theodore Besterman conceals some of his most original thoughts on Gibbon; his less original thoughts on this subject, though still valuable, form the introduction to an American "Portable Gibbon". That recondite and forbidding periodical *Studies in Voltaire and the Eighteenth Century* has two sparkling essays from him on aspects of the Enlightenment; one of which, on "The Scottish Enlightenment", produced something of a stir when he had the temerity to deliver it as a lecture at St Andrews, another lecture, was published in pamphlet form in 1975, though some of it survived in an introduction to a selection from Clarendon's *History*, which now seems to have been re-memorized. So far as I know he has never reprinted an essay on "The Baroque Century", which served as the introduction to a cooperative volume on *The Age of Expansion* in 1968. Lamentably, there are probably others which have escaped my notice. Lamentably, because even in his slightest work he displays those powers of imagination which are a stimulus to other historians. To quote his own words again, by way of *envoy*: "In the end, it is the imagination of the historian, not his scholarship or his methods (necessary though these are), which will discern the hidden forces of change."

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To whitewash the whites

By Simon Jenkins

MERVYN REES and CHRIS DAY:
Muldergate
The Story of the Info Scandal
222p. Macmillan South Africa.
distributed by Rex Collings. £7.50.
0 86954 089 0

The South African information department scandal, which broke surface in 1978 and bubbled fiercely until the resignation of President John Vorster in 1980, can be read in two ways. To most liberal critics of South Africa it was a squalid but inevitable consequence of the moral degradation of apartheid. For many South Africans, however, the manner of its uncovering was a testament to the country's political maturity and to the extent of judicial and press freedom which still exists there. Both views probably overstate its significance.

The scandal itself was blissfully straightforward. An ambitious new man arrives to head the government information department at the unprecedentedly young age of thirty-eight. This man, Eschel Rhodde, conceives a dramatic plan to take South Africa's case of the defensive with a drive to establish front organizations, agencies and covert "friends of South Africa" throughout the Western world. South Africa, said Rhodde, should break through the "paper curtain" constructed round her by the world's media.

Rhodde worked skilfully within the government elite to secure the support of such figures as Dr Connie Mulder, her apparent prime minister John Vorster, General van den Bergh, the head of BOSS, and even Mr Vorster himself. Mulder in particular saw his plan as the spearhead of a new internationalism, a "verligte" (enlightened) campaign to bring about South Africa's eventual readmission to the world community. It was the "new" foreign policy, and Rhodde was the epitome of the new Afrikaner cosmopolitan, self-confident, extrovert, a far cry from the dour Boer of English ridicule.

The price Rhodde put on his plan was a huge £32 million. It depended for its success on being kept absolutely secret - as secret as any defence project. This money was duly agreed in 1972 by a cabinet committee headed by the prime minister himself.

From then on Rhodde's fertile, extravagant but naive political imagination ran riot. His department's

work became a trail of luxury villas, executive jets, expense accounts and well-heeled agents in every capital. Money was used to help United States congressmen and British MPs, a back-ed political party in Norway, the Club of Ten in London and the prominent minister of the Sevenshells; it established lecture tours, university research institutes, church pressure groups, book publishing houses, specialist magazines; it delved into the murky world of international arms and oil dealing. But most of all, Rhodde (an ex-journalist) was obsessed with the press. At the expense of some £15m his department financed a newspaper in South Africa, the *Citizen*, to counter the liberal bias of the English-language press. He tried to buy the ailing *Washington Star* in America, *L'Express* in Paris, the *Investors Chronicle* in London. He almost gained majority control of the British publishing house Morgan Grampian.

A Western journalist, publisher or politician had only to mention South Africa in a remotely sympathetic tone and a Rhodde operator would try to stuff money in his pockets.

Rhodde's joy-ride at government expense lasted six years. All the principals involved in it are now disgraced. Credit for his downfall can go to successive judicial inquiries, brave investigative reporting (which in South Africa means very brave), political in-fighting - and ultimately, the absurdity of Rhodde's original concept. Vorster blocked the department's funds in 1978, but it was his resignation as prime minister and Mulder's bid to succeed him which tore the scandal open. Mulder's opponents, and especially Mr P. W. Botha, found in it the perfect weapon against him. In the end he was expelled from the National Party and now haunts its right wing (Mulder is nothing if not opportunistic) with his National Conservative Party. Vorster himself later had to resign as State President.

Muldergate is the story of the affair as seen by two journalists on the *Rand Daily Mail*, Mervyn Rees and Chris Day, involved in tracking down Rhodde as he fled from retribution across Europe and America. It is basically their diary of the case and is largely unanalytical, lapsing frequently into memoirs, notes, and reprinted newspaper articles. Though this yields frequent insights into the exotic personalities who crossed his path, the narrative is spoilt by the reporter's fascination with their own process of work, colleagues' sarcasm, editors' fretful, wives and families

neglected. Rhodde, Mulder, Vorster, Judge Mostert (the real hero of *Muldergate*) are at times just the supporting cast for Messrs Rees and Day. Much of the book is in *oratio recta* and the recounting of every verbal exchange between the journalists often looks suspiciously like subsequent dramatization. Since there is no index, the book is useless for reference purposes. And the whole suffers from being a near parody of Woodward and Bernstein's *All the President's Men*.

Nonetheless *Muldergate* is a gripping story. Rhodde emerges as an astonishing, almost endearing, character, a flash of colour across the universal grey of Pretoria bureaucracy. And by telling their tale in the manner of a schoolboy thriller, Rees and Day perhaps unintentionally bring the infoscandal into its proper perspective.

This was no Watergate. The CIA might frown at Rhodde's extravagance and incompetence but hardly at his ethics. He wrecked one politician's chances of the premiership, but he destabilized no government, caused no deaths or injuries (the Schmidt murders mentioned in the book remain unsolved), and it is hard to discern what damage he could anyway have done to South Africa's international reputation. His was essentially a budgetary crime, and what government, be it ever so liberal, is free of those? Indeed how many members of the United Nations would bother to subject such goings-on to judicial inquiry, press censure and dismissal from office?

Muldergate was chiefly an offence against Afrikaner political respectability. It trod on the old cane: the Afrikaner's naivety and sense of international inferiority compared with the English community. It had less to do with apartheid than with the hypocrisy and rambling inefficiency of one-party government grown lax in its control procedures. The eventual uncovering of the scandal was a function partly of South Africa's comparatively overt politics, but partly also of the tattered shreds of judicial, legislative and press constraints on executive power which still exist in South Africa.

And here, the press must take pre-eminence. Judges, politicians and civil servants could bring Rhodde and Mulder to account. But the press - in this case Rees, Day and *Alister Sparks's Rand Daily Mail* - provided the stage on which they did so, and that stage in South Africa is still, tenuously, free. This book at least shows how precious is that freedom.

Information, please

Joseph Conrad (1857-1924): location of any Conrad manuscripts or typescripts not reported in Gordon Lindstrand's survey of the items published in *Conradiana* in 1969; for a descriptive catalogue of the literary manuscripts.

Donald W. Rude.
Texas Tech University, Lubbock, Texas 79409.

E. M. Delafeld (Mrs Paul Dashwood), author of *The Diary of a Provincial Lady*: personal reminiscences of anecdotes sought for biography.

Jeffrey Spence.
34 Manor Avenue, Caterham CR3 6AN.

Alphonse Esquros (1812-76), French Romantic writer and political activist: any information about him; including his stay in England (1854-69), documents correspondence, literary associations; for a doctoral thesis.

Anthony Zielonka.
81, Lyttelton Road, Stechford, Birmingham B33 8BN.

Thomas Gresham (1519-79), financial agent of Elizabeth I at Antwerp: whereabouts of any letters written by him not yet printed or calendared in print, or listed in any printed bibliography; for a collected edition of his letters, to be published by the London Record Society.

G. D. Ramsay.
15, Charlbury Road, Oxford OX2 6JT.

John Haslam (1764-1844), Apothecary to Royal Bethlehem Hospital until 1816; references to his contributions to the lay periodical press, such as *Literary Gazette*, or any written or printed contemporary documents other than medical ("Barleycorn Club"), by or about him, excepting William Jervis's books; for a study of his life and relationship to Dr Wm Kitchiner, (d 1827) of the *Cook's Oracle*, etc.

Francis Shiller.
University of California, San Francisco, Department of the History of Health Sciences, Room 406 U, San Francisco, California 94143.

Historical epic poems published in English since 1960: in book, format; original epic as well as historical or epic improvisations, adaptations, re-tellings or workings; information and copies needed for an annotated bibliography.

DeWitt Clinton.
Department of English, University of Wisconsin - Whitewater, Whitewater, Wisconsin 53190.

Hurford Jones, author of *The Coloured Brat*: unpublished play performed at Gateway Theatre Club, London, in 1950; copy needed for research purposes.

G. A. Smith.
Department of General Studies, Wulfrun College of Further Education, Peget Road, Wolverhampton WY6 0DU.

John Mackintosh MP: I have recently deposited the papers of my late husband John Mackintosh in the National Library of Scotland and have placed the absolute minimum of restrictions on access to them. Owners of letters or papers connected with him are invited to add to this collection; the originals can, if desired, be copied and returned.

Una Maclean Mackintosh.
Nether Liberton House, Old Mill Lane, Gifford Road, Edinburgh EH16 9TZ.

Sir Robert Sangster Rait (1874-1936), sometime Principal of Glasgow University: whereabouts of his papers or of his two surviving daughters, Ruth and Margaret.

Hugh Talloch.
Department of History, University of Bristol, Wills Memorial Building, Queens Road, Bristol BS8 1RJ.

Robert Torrens (1780-1864), political economist: whereabouts of his long-lost private papers bequeathed to his second wife Esther (née Serle) but not mentioned in her will; nor in that of Torrens's second son, Robert R. Torrens; only direct descendants by a granddaughter who married Sir Rowland Hill's only son; for a biography.

Peter L. Moore.
Research School of Social Sciences, Australian National University, PO Box 4, Canberra ACT 2600.

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Aspects of Irishness

By Patricia Craig

SEAN O'FAOLAIN:

Collected Stories
Volume 2
450pp. Constable. £8.95.
0 09 46210 9

"There are two types of Irishman I cannot stand. The first is always trying to behave the way he thinks the English behave. The second is always trying to behave the way he thinks the Irish behave." In the story "Persecution Mania", O'Faolain's narrator, who is probably not too sharply differentiated from the author, proceeds to take as an example of the second type a political journalist who gets malice, loquaciousness, soapiness, spleen, effrontery, jocular, feyness and cynicism into his manner out of a benighted wish to embody all the so-called national traits. Affection of Irishness is an appropriate target for ridicule in Irish fiction, and here, as elsewhere, Sean O'Faolain ridicules it with as much verve as, say, Myles na gCopaleen (Flann O'Brien), but with rather less acerbity. It is more usual, though, in O'Faolain's stories, to find ostentatious (and ostensibly Irish) behaviour ascribed to a natural extravagance of temperament - not affected at all. Or, if it is assumed, it's assumed so thoroughly that it appears instinctive. The vivid exaggerations - "The wind that blew the legs off her, or the bus that went down Fifth Avenue at a hundred miles an hour" - barefaced blather, vigorous bellyaching, roaring and scoffing: these aspects of Irishness are aspects of these stories too. But only aspects: what interests O'Faolain more than full-blooded characterization is the subtle interaction between the complementary follies of his characters.

He handles flamboyance easily, in a traditional Irish way, but many of his most satisfactory stories - "Lovers of the Lake", for example, "Love's Young Dream" or "A Sweet Colleen" - are not in the least flamboyant. These are marked by a different kind of deftness; they are graceful and discreet. As he said himself, he relishes "secret, self-deceiving ambiguities" more than the "crisp certainties of the world at large" - innocent postures and pretences which may show up as much as they conceal. Jenny, the adulterous wife in "Lovers of the Lake", needs to cling to God as much as to her lover Flannery. To demonstrate her faith, or her penitence, or just to assert an element of her personality which she feels has been overlooked, she sets off for a bleak island in a Donegal lake - St Patrick's Purgatory. Here, barefoot pilgrims walk with outstretched arms over sharp stones or kneel praying in the rain and mud. For three days, they go without sleep and food. Are these ascetic, self-mortifying, lunatic Irish Catholics? Not a bit of it, they are the plain people - though they do derive some obscure moral benefit from the exercise, difficult for the uninitiated to apprehend, which puts them in touch with the spirit of the early Christian church. Flannery, in O'Faolain's story, follows Jenny to the island - not, as she at first supposes, for the purposes of mockery, but simply in an attempt to understand the peculiarities of her nature. (He is a successful Dublin surgeon and atheist.) He - a tolerant and worldly ex-Catholic - distrusts extremes, particularly extremes of religious feeling. His sympathy for Jenny is undiminished, but by the end of the story, much of their relationship has been reached: the end of the affair.

Further ambiguities of feeling and indecision in comprehension occur in "Love's Young Dream" - O'Faolain here is, ironically, ironically, with the adult narrator, comically intervening to interpret and comment on his adolescent, amorous experiences at sixteen or so. "Each of us was trying to instruct the other without exposing the fact that neither of us had anything to reveal." Comment on the meaning restores, however, as Eliot said, "in a

different form": here, sharper and more complex. There's a marvellous sense of late childhood, of the countryside around the Curragh, of security, gaiety, oddity and intemperance about this story, undercut, of course, by retrospective melancholy and knowingness. The balance is impressively maintained.

The folly of trying to give substance to an illusion that thrives on evasiveness and secrecy is the subject of "One Night in Turin", whose mock-lavish opening - "One robin singing, cloud-racing, wet-grassed Monday morning last April" - seems carefully designed to make you imagine, wrongly, that you are in for a piece of overblown Celtic whimsy. The hero of this story, in the end, experiences "the depths of... delight and misery", these emotions occurring simultaneously for maximum impact. O'Faolain's characters, it's true, generally do get the most out of their predicament; everything is felt to an extreme. The small contortions are turned into high comedy: the behaviour of the dotty old aunt in "Dividends", for example, whose inability to grasp the rudiments of a simple financial arrangement may be seen as a peculiar kind of earnestness. (This lady is labelled openly with the author's name, re-augmented - Whelan - which raises an interesting point about the convergence of fiction and autobiography in the stories.)

Adolescent holidays spent "sitting under dripping hedges in West Cork, talking Irish to old men with mouths full of bad teeth and minds full of primordial memories" gave Sean O'Faolain a taste for heroic absurdities: a stint with the anti-Treaty forces in the Civil War of 1922-23 provided him with special insight into the republican mentality; asperation with the course of Irish political thinking after 1923 made him sceptical about the integrity and the *saivir faire* of politicians. Irish philistinism was a source of bitterness too; he lived, after all, in what Brian Moore has referred to as "the book-binding Ireland of the Twenties through to the Fifties" and his own first collection of stories, *Midsummer Night Madness* (1932) was an early object of suspicion for the Censorship Board. There is nothing sour or demoralized about O'Faolain's social criticism, though; he keeps his comments on this subject playful and unimpassioned. They are none the less pointed: to call a popu-

lar newspaper the *Daily Crucifix* tells us something, after all, about the role of the church in Ireland. And what of the soulful/shop-keeping dichotomy, the round tower standing aloof and the greasy mill? O'Faolain's revolutionaries - turned - businessmen simply capitalize on the glamour of nationalism in their trade names: Celtic Corsets, Gaelic Gowns. "I was working for Ireland", declares Joe in "No Country for Old Men". Building up the country we fought for." And what was he doing? Manufacturing corsets "with designs from the Lindisfarne Gospels on 'em".

You might think this is going too far; but the story is so richly ambivalent and complicated that it easily accommodates the small piece of blatant fun. O'Faolain takes a couple of elderly Dubliners, Civil War veterans, one of them a prosperous company director, the other his employee, and sets them blundering along the border between the North and the South in the aftermath of an IRA attack on a barracks (it is the late 1950s: not the current IRA campaign but the last one, which had more of force and less of ferocity about it). The men (who are implicated in the incident, but only peripherally) are lumbered moreover with the body of a dead terrorist. "Once more they struggled up the road, bearing the youth between them." What's also dead and gone, of course, is their own youth - the ideals it fostered, the chimerical republic. One - the cleverer one - gets a taste of exhilaration from the present foolhardy undertaking, the other holds on to his natural shrewdness and caution - purposeless, as it turns out. O'Faolain uses one of his most effective devices - the striking mischance presented comically, or at least briskly and laconically - to let us know what happened: "Less than half an hour later they were back in the North, facing the guns of a Northern patrol." Instead of making their way into the South and safety they have taken a wrong turning.

This story, for all its virtuosity and humour, is full of matter; many issues are raised and aired in the course of one significant night. It's one of O'Faolain's best; but every thing included in this excellent volume demands, and repays, the closest consideration. The stories are diverting and disquieting by turns, in the most illuminating manner.

Looking at the consequences

By Anthony Delius

ALAN PATON:

Ab, But Your Land is Beautiful
271pp. Cape. £6.95.
0 224 01981 3

Not only his depth, fervour and organization of racism in South Africa given a new word - apartheid - to the dictionary of world politics, but it has also made a sizeable contribution to the number of the world's books, from academic monographs to light fiction. The subject has engendered verse and plays (among them what must be one of the best comedies of the twentieth century, *Seven Brides for Wanda*), and has been the basis of TV dramas and discussions with such regularity that it is startling to bore viewers.

Alan Paton, who could make a fair claim to having sparked off much of this literary activity, has now published a novel looking back over the social and political consequences of all that he had warned against in his first novel over thirty years ago. The success of *Cry, the Beloved Country* awakened many other writers to the world-wide interest in what had hitherto seemed the worthy but rather dreary subject of race relations: Paton's new novel, *Ab, But Your Land is Beautiful*, seems designed to see if he can repeat his earlier performance.

At least that is the impression given by the publishers, who

announce: "It is the first novel in a trilogy... which may even surpass the extraordinary impact of Paton's classic. Even the new novel's title, ironically echoing the title of its predecessor, seems to invite comparison and present a challenge. The latter novel begins where the earlier one left off, when the apartheid of the new Nationalist Government had begun to entrench in law and further institutionalized the slightly more haphazard race discrimination of former days. The style of *Cry, the Beloved Country* is reproduced almost exactly in the new book with its use of longish passages of explanatory dialogue and sequences of terse dramatic-like interventions by the author. And again it is from one of these interventions that the new book takes its title."

Ab, but the land is beautiful. It is the land where Sister Aiden met her unspeakable death, and 14-year-old Johnnie Reynolds hanged himself in his bedroom because the white high school turned him away.

Some of the characters, too, have a family resemblance to those of the earlier novel, but are brought forward into more troubled times. The new novel is an amalgam of fact and fiction: imaginary characters rub shoulders with many who are living or have recently lived in the real South Africa of today. A whole representative host of South African humanity moves through the book in gathering agitation - white liberals, Indian merchants, officials of the Department of Justice, black head-

Magic and poison

By John Ryle

PETER CAREY:

Bliss
396pp. Faber. £6.50.
0 571 11769 4

Now that the regular stuff of serious fiction has become darkness, madness, dope, odd sex and dire futurity, it is worth singling out from the ruck of such fashionable perversity an author with a truly striking vision of the dark side of the family romance and the fraught times that engender it. Peter Carey's variable but compelling collection of short stories, *The Fair Man in History* (1980, now published in paperback as *Exotic Pleasures*, the better to tap the perversity market) contains some vivid fantasies of the near future, a future that one character refers to sardonically as "the most picturesque phase of capitalism". Carey's first novel links these futures to our present in the story of an advertising man whose temporary death from heart failure jolts him into a radically novel view of the world he inhabits and his own right place in it.

Harry Joy takes about as long to die as Tristram Shandy took to get born, and his story has the same ingeniously anecdotal structure. In notebooks he charts the topography of hell, as he now perceives his pleasant bourgeois life to be, with a sad compulsiveness. His guide to these infernal regions is Honey Barbara, hippie and part-time whore whom he meets after leaving his wife, who herself dreams of leaving him and heading the other way: New York, capitalism's heart of darkness, where she will become a hotshot adwoman. Their son dreams of drug-running in South America; their daughter dreams of revolution. They are people, Honey Barbara reckons, with trunksloads of dreams and ideas, but nothing in the present.

Carey is serious about dreams and delusions. Harry's new vision of the ugliness and despair in the here and now releases all kinds of magic and poison in the family network. He goes home, he is committed to a mental hospital by his son; his wife takes over his advertising agency; his partner takes over his wife; she dies of cancer; he leaves the city for the rain forest where Honey Barbara

lives with her father, a beekeeper, in an enclave of communards and cult-followers. (This is where bliss comes in.)

Here Harry remembers the world of his own father, who read palms and told stories, "stories that drifted like groundsel seed and took root in unlikely places". In the transition to a longer form of fiction, Carey has retained a notion of the story, in its various guises of dream, legend and anecdote, as something more solid and elemental than the elaborate architectonics of the novel. *Bliss* is, in fact, a novel largely about stories - marriage as a meeting of two family mythologies, advertisements as a kind of alchemy of the imagination opposed to the natural magic of the wild - and how stories can trap people or lead them astray or take them, once in a while, to blissful conclusions. Carey uses coarse elements of farce - elephants that sit on cars, funny waiters or wives and lovers caught *flagrant delicto* - and ancient narrative devices ("When he was about to die in a foreign country years later...") with a stylish insouciance. They work perhaps because the mode of his narrative is not strictly realistic, and because of an implication that the reality of people in cities who read books is itself some form of false consciousness. There is a nostalgia for the spoken word, the rapid audience of children or forest dwellers; and a pantheistic yearning for the silence of the forest.

When Harry finally escapes to the pastoral realm and fades into the greenwood, the narrative does suffer a little genre-slippage and the reader cannot help missing the blithe security of Carey's more swart passages. The happy hippies in the forest bear a dispiriting resemblance to hobbits. It is touching, though, that a writer of Carey's gifts, one whose short stories are so bleak and doom-laden, should be lured into this sentimentality by a nostalgia for happy endings.

The second issue of *Short Story Monthly*, edited by Flora Phillips, is now available (78pp. Armory, Methven Road, Whitecraigs, Glasgow. 80p) and contains new stories by Jack Trevor Story and Tim Owens, as well as previously published work by Doris Lessing, Heinrich Böll, Fred Uggahar, Kazuo Ishiguro and Frank Yuohy. The first issue included stories by Flannery O'Connor, Paul Theroux and John Updike.

rather more functional than flesh and blood. It is some of the minor characters who come alive, such as the poison-pen letter writer, Proud White Christian Woman, and Prem's parents - the wealthy Indian merchant, M.K. Bodasingh, and yet sharp-tongued Mrs Bodasingh, even Mrs Bodasingh seems speaking out of Paton's own occasional despondency when she turns on her husband and his friend and cries, "You don't want to be liberated... You'd much rather be governed by Dr. Malan than by Chief Lutuli and Dr. Monty."

South African readers, or some of them, might wonder if there isn't lurking in the subconscious of all the book that reluctance of all the minorities in the country to be ruled by the black majority. The very liberalism Paton himself espouses may be suspect to some, as wanting to dilute the possibility of that rule. We are of course presented in the book with many black individuals: yet curiously enough there is little impression of the overwhelming African majority. We seem to peer at the Africans from the superstitious ture of a white world, administrative or intellectual. This may, of course, be a subtle device of Paton's to present the general condition of white South Africans, but it detracts from the comprehensibility of the novel. Or perhaps Paton is going to take us deeper into the society and identity of the black majority when he publishes the next novel of his trilogy. Judging by his achievement in *Ab, But Your Land is Beautiful* his powers are nowhere near falling.

BIOGRAPHY

RODNEY ENGEN:

Kate Greenaway: A Biography
240pp. MacDonald. £14.95.
0 354 04200 9

"No one could draw roses like Kate Greenaway", said her friend Mrs Allingham. The tragedy, for Kate's own emotional well-being, was that she could not only draw the emblems but recreate the girl, nine-year-old Rosie Poise, Rose La Touche, whom Ruskin fell in love with, proposed marriage to, and lost. When Rose died after estrangement and madness, Ruskin sought substitutes by entertaining local schoolgirls, and by devouring the images of innocence and classic childish beauty he found in Kate Greenaway's early books. But whereas Ruskin loved the images, so very different from their plain and dumpy maker, Kate fell in love with Ruskin himself. And whereas Kate's genius was for inventing and drawing quaint, nostalgic clothes and accessories for her figures (would her career nowadays have more resembled Laura Ashley's?), Ruskin wanted these done away with, in studies of "girlies" meant for his eyes:

As we've got so far as taking off hats (he wrote to her), I trust we may in time get to take off just a little more - say mittens - and then - perhaps - even shoes - and - (for fairies) even... stockings - and then -

It was a relationship conducted chiefly by correspondence. Ruskin and Kate Greenaway corresponded for two years before they met in 1882, and the letters went on, daily at times, until Ruskin's death eight years later. Rodney Engen's is the second full-scale biography of Kate Greenaway, and the first to be able to quote the surviving letters without impediment. The first book, by M. H. Spielmann and C. S. Layard (father of Auden's "loony Layard"), had to contend with Joan Severn, Ruskin's cousin and protector, penning through anything in the Master's letters that would suggest more than "an ordinary affectionate friendship". Their book, published in 1905, four years after Kate Greenaway's death, was in any case a work of piety (it began: "About the name of Kate Greenaway there floats a perfume so sweet and fragrant that even at the moment of her death we thought more of the artist than of the friend we had lost.") Mr Engen's account of the Ruskin-Greenaway friendship is, naturally, therefore, the core of his book.

Kate Greenaway was the daughter of John Greenaway, a wood engraver of good reputation and occasional livelihood. Shortly after Kate, his second daughter, was born, he decided to leave the firm of Landells and set up on his own, on the strength of an important-seeming commission for new illustrations to Dickens. This project was so crucial to his career that he appears to have sent his family away from their home in the new East London artisan suburb of Hoxton to stay with relatives in a Nottinghamshire village, Rolleston, so that he could work without distraction. The parting lasted two years (was this thought all odd or unjust at the time? Mr Engen does not speculate), and the work was all in vain, for the publisher of the Dickens edition went bankrupt, and Greenaway was never paid.

For Kate, this episode was the beginning of a lifelong feeling that Rolleston was her real home, a country her mind could always relapse into when London or adult life weighed heavy. "I suppose I went to it very young before I could really remember and that is why I have such a wild delight in cowslips and apple blossoms. They always give me the strange feeling of trying to remember, as if I had known them in a former world." Rolleston was comparatively prosperous farmland, its inhabitants engagingly old-fashioned in dress and sentiment; and on later

Tiptoeing through the cowslips

By Mari Prichard

family visits Kate always saw it at its best, in summer. Small wonder, then, that in adulthood it was always the countryside of her imagination. Edmund Evans, her printer, complained of her failure to love any but calm-weather skies, blue and white. Even as a child her heights of excitement and delight - at parties, for instance - would be followed by depression, deep "days of gloom" and melancholy reflection that such happiness could not last and "joy surfeited turns to sorrow". Each return from Rolleston re-engraved her sense of loss:

I live in a London street, then I long and long to be the whole day the sweet flowers among

she wrote in *Marigold Garden*, in characteristically awkward but heartfelt nursery verse. Eventually she made enough money from her books to buy her own house, but it was no further out of London than Hampstead, and Ruskin, from the fastness of his Lakeland mansion, deplored the compromise.

Shy, short-sighted and aware of her gracelessness, Kate hated growing up, and fled from most of the attempts to educate her conventionally at such establishments as the Misses Fivesh's Ladies' School (where the cross-eyed Miss Anne Fivesh produced in Kate a trembling fit that lasted for days). But her family were sympathetic ("I was never told I was tiresome when I was young, but I was constantly told I was odd"), and her father fostered her artistic ability until she was old enough to undergo professional training. She undertook the extraordinarily rigorous National Course of Art Instruction, instituted by Sir Henry Cole (alias the children's editor "Felix Summerly"), and eventually enrolled in the Female School of Art at South Kensington, one of the predecessors of the Royal College of Art.

Cole's aim was to produce fine industrial art and decoration, and Kate won a national award for a set of tile designs. When she tried to study life-drawing at Heatherley's and at the Slade where Edward Poynter belovied "Do not copy, express form!", she became confused. Her understanding of anatomy was always uncertain, the limbs in her drawings often being mere appendages to the clothes, which she made herself before painting them on her models. But she was qualified to start earning a living with book and magazine illustrations and the occasional gallery sale. She never questioned her right to compete for work with men, as a plain woman from an artisan family, with scant prospect of marriage, she had little option. She had no patience with the late-Victorian feminists who wanted to type her as a successful woman artist, or to put on exhibitions exclus-

ively of women's work. Nor could she afford the aristocratic opinions that she encountered later from such as Ruskin, who believed that nothing of merit could be actuated by so mean a motive as money, and who would far rather "if I had a daughter, that she were a scullery-maid, or a milkmaid, than a London hack artist".

The characteristic Greenaway children and clothes began to appear on valentines and Christmas cards. Then, when Kate was thirty-three, Edmund Evans the colour printer took his celebrated gambles, and brought out *Under the Window*, a book of Kate's own verses and drawings, delicately wood-engraved, in a first edition (by Evans's own account) of 20,000 copies, which sold out immediately. The book seemed to hit every possible mark at once. It was well designed and printed, delicate and "aesthetic", nostalgic and charming; and the Greenaway name was made. (Only three years later, in 1882, Mr Bulfinch in *Vice Versa* was turning home from the horrors of Dr Gritstone's school to find his house "lit up by Chinese lanterns and crowded with little 'Kate Greenaway' maidens.") At which point a mutual friend, knowing Ruskin to be an admirer of her work, encouraged him to write to her, to promote her success and to help mould her talent.

It was a role Ruskin already knew to be dangerous to his protégés. Rossetti and Burne-Jones had each escaped and gone their own ways. Young women were easier to manage, and his facility for gaining their adoration was already well-known. Kate Greenaway, humble, anxious and retiring, was easy prey to his charm. Three years after the first letter, he began calling her "Kate" and invited her to Cumberland. She was greatly afraid of going, afraid of seeming dull during a long visit. "You are not to make so much of me, for I am not in the least a frog Princess. Wouldn't it be nice if I were, to emerge suddenly, brilliant and splendid?" But, as Mr Engen shows, Ruskin charmed away her nervousness, and lifted her life on to another plane. "Everything is confused, I never know day or date," she wrote to Edmund Evans's wife.

"Words can hardly say the sort of man he is - perfect, simply... Mr Ruskin wants me to stay, wants me to tell him things about colour, and puts it in such a way I can't well leave."

She did leave, after a month which had dispensed some of Ruskin's darker moods as well. But back in London she felt only loneliness and loss; and from then on for some twelve years she lived for the excitement that she experienced from Ruskin's attention, and languished whenever she felt neglected. Ruskin by turns praised her work in glowing terms that his contemporaries found

embarrassing (the most celebrated instance was his 1883 Oxford lecture), set her ungenerous drawing lessons and correspondence courses in perspective, and tried to fend her off when she seemed too dependent on his direction. When she made plain her love and desperate need of him, he indulged in flirtatious letters adorned with kisses. "Yes, that x was for your very own and here are x's four more for being so very good." Sometimes he demanded her presence, sometimes preemptively put her off. Joan Severn wrote in 1888:

Of course the poor Coz [Ruskin] was both cruel and foolish in having K.O. on a visit, but I believe she pestered him into it, and is herself so foolish in the matter and quite asserts she has a right to expect all sorts of favours from him after the way he has gone on with her - and perhaps she is right, but oh the sorrow and perplexity of it all... It is all inexpressibly sad.

On other occasions, he tried to silence her claims for preferential treatment by writing to her about his other female admirers, his "pets". Kate knew that she had none of the usual qualities of the pets. Her only card was her ability to draw "girlies", and she played it devotedly, with paintings and decorated letters, until Ruskin's death, long after his final illness had deprived him of the power to reply, and other pets had fallen by the wayside.

She lived to see her enormous early sales gradually diminish, as initiators like Lizzie Lawson helped sate the generation's appetite for what the perhaps more appreciative French called "Greenawayisme". Reviewers began to complain that she was merely repeating herself, and

Beardsley's unsavoury subjects and the haze of the Impressionists seemed to mock her loyalty to Beauty and clear line. Needing money, she took up oil-painting; canvasses fetched so much more than water-colours in the galleries, and the permanence of oils was beguiling to an artist known mainly for books torn up in the nursery. She died before she had learnt enough of the technique to profit by it. Yet Lizzie Lawson is certainly forgotten, while original Greenaway titles remain in print, and La Mode Greenaway in children's clothes continues to appear, whether in its Ashley incarnation in the shops, or custom-made for society weddings. Oil paintings could hardly have done better.

Mr Engen handles his story confidently enough, until the to-and-fros of the Ruskin affair, interspersed with the progress of Kate Greenaway's career, put a strain on his decision to follow chronology and on his reader's ability to perceive the general drift. But the only serious disappointment, in a book meant for the general reader, is that so many coloured originals of paintings and book illustrations should have to be reproduced in black-and-white. Nor was the author well-served by his publisher's production department in their placing of the eight colour plates. Reading on page forty-nine about a water-colour called "Little Miss Prim", one concludes with regret that one will have to depend on Mr Engen's detailed description of it. Opposite page 201 appears the picture itself. A list of illustrations would have been a help. But there is a useful chronological list of Greenaway-illustrated books, which provides some clarity about such things as the discrepant publication dates given elsewhere in the literature for *Under the Window*.

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Folly

I rise from a circle standing on a square
And cock my dunce's cap at the firmament
Keeping my ignorance tapered to a clear
Sugar loaf point above the dark green ferment.

A lord's pride made me to relieve the poor
With heavy work lifting my spine, and the rich
With light step ascending my gazebo stair
To admire the land they owned and wish for more.

My form is epicene: male when the gold
Seed of the sun comes melting through my skin
Of old grey stucco: female when the mould
Of moonlight makes my witch-pup cone obscene.

My four doors bricked up against vandals, still
Tumescant, scrawled with ruck, I crest the hill.

Richard Murphy

commentary

How I lived in a very big house and found God

By Kingsley Amis

Brideshead Revisited
Granada TV

Evelyn Waugh was a marvellous writer, but one of a sort peculiarly likely to write a bad book at any moment. The worst of his, worse even than *The Loved One*, must be *Brideshead Revisited*. But long before the Granada TV serial came along it was his most enduringly popular novel; the current Penguin reprint is the nineteenth in its line. The chief reason for this success is obviously and simply that here we have a whacking, heavily romantic book about nobles. (Indeed, almost any old book about nobles seems sure to do at least reasonably well in the English-speaking world, as is suggested by the prosperous career of Nancy Mitford, for instance.)

Nobles, of course, are in themselves not at all bad people to write or read about, and to take the small and inevitable step from nobles to snobs, they too are perfectly harmless as such and, with their eye for social nuance, actually well suited for writing novels. We may infer that a given novelist is a snob and still wish him well, though we will perhaps feel a little different if he brandishes his pen in our faces. The trouble comes when, as with *Brideshead*, snobbery corrupts judgement.

It is as if Evelyn Waugh came to believe that since about all he looked for in his companions was wealth, rank, Roman Catholicism (where possible) and beauty (where appropriate), those same attributes and no more would be sufficient for the central characters in a long novel, enough or getting on for enough, granted a bit of style thrown in, to establish them as both glamor-

ous and morally significant. That last blurring produced a book I would rather expect a conscientious Catholic to find repulsive, but such matters are none of my concern. Certainly the author treats those characters with an almost cringing respect, implying throughout that they are important and interesting in some way over and above what we are shown of them.

The Flyte family, or the Marquis of Marchmain's family, or the family whose house Brideshead is, or what you will, are a band of bores. They hang about, idle rich in an extra sense, given too little to do by the author, ironically, the one he himself regards as rather a bore. Lord Brideshead or Bridget, the elder son, emerges as the least boring of them because, on his smallest scale, he is the most fully shaped as a character. As a result he transfers successfully to the screen, with the admirable Simon Jones giving the most sympathetic and enjoyable performance of the six. Elsewhere, the cast have their work cut out.

In the original, there is nothing much to Lady Marchmain, mother of Bridget, Sebastian, Julia and Cordelia, also not fully acknowledged as a pal-mum figure, long-serving hostess to Charles Ryder, the narrator, she just trying and predictably failing to keep Sebastian away from the drink or is she the agent of something more repressive, even destructive, something the self-exiled Lord Marchmain ran away from long ago? We never learn; the conversation shifts to her dead brother, but nothing emerges about them either. All this, or what there is of this, is no more than reproduced in the serial. As repeatedly happens, the vacancy of the novel cannot help being thrown into prominence by the mere process of screening, the removal of the filter of literary presentation, but here the authority of

the actress, Claire Bloom, makes it seem to matter less at the time.

Under-employment grips the figure of Lord Marchmain even more severely. All he is really needed for is dying a doctrinally edifying death near the end, and Waugh earlier allows him no more than a walk-on in Venice and being in his house in Venice and comparing Italian with Austrian party-cooks. But no television company is going to get its unit to Venice and end up with a couple of minutes of screen-time. As it is we are treated to nearly half an hour of eventless sightsee blown up from a mere nine pages, a straggling Martini commercial rounded off with some corny Latin wisdom (all out of the novel) from the old fellow's girlfriend, or "mistress" as she is quaintly called. This bit, coming where it did (second half of second episode), must have done a good deal to depress the ratings. The lead-up to Marchmain's death is most affecting, but not particularly more so than any other character's would have been with Laurence Olivier to play him and neither book nor adaptation has told us enough about him for his last-minute return to the bosom of the Church to seem very momentous.

Let me pause briefly and admonish those critics who after laying about the acting, direction, etc with a will, join in a drowsy chorus of "But it must be admitted that the whole thing looks ravishing." Well yes, but so it bloody should. From the way some of them go on you would think the camera-team had had a hand in building Christ Church or St Mark's instead of just pointing their instrument in approximately the right direction and remembering to take the cap off the snout. Any producer will tell you that keeping the public out of view is the real task.

Back, with a faint groan, to those Flytes. Cordelia is no less boring and officious on the screen than in the novel, and Phoebe Nicholls could do little to redeem her occasional lurches into poeticality. Such lurches are far more thoroughgoing and harder to bear in the case of Julia. There is nothing in this bad book worse, more embarrassing, more saddening, than her long pseudo-hysterical tirade after Bridget's "bombshell". Her character as illustrated by her behaviour is simply that of a prodigy of egotism, visibly subject to mood and whim in a way that suggests insufficient opposition in early life, about as charming as that of Brenda Last, whom she powerfully evokes in her treatment of Rex Mottram. The most plausible explanation of her final dismissal of Charles Ryder is nothing more religious than a desire to be bitchy to him with God to back her up - after all, he (Ryder) did try to cross her over getting a priest for her father. But Diana Quick contrives to make this scene quite touching, no worse than something out of Graham Greene.

One grave defect common to the portrayals of Cordelia, Julia, Sebastian and Julia is that they are not nearly push enough. Those four are nothing if not upper-class in a closer sense of the construction than usual. But the actors all put glacial stops in front of initial vowels, pronounce the H's in unstressed words ("he has lost his way") and use a German or King's Road short A ("the cult suit on the mult") and a short E that is half way to "jat sat". Diana Quick calls her papa "poppa". Andrews stresses the second syllable in "café". Irons knows how, that for the moment he wonders? When he turns quickly to fire on the wolves who are gaining in spite of the efforts of two exhausted rocking chairs, he is really excited. He is pretending that wolves are behind but he isn't pretending he thinks that wolves are behind. He feels they are, he sort of believes they are, he half believes it. No, it isn't that he half believes it, he doesn't. It is more that just for the moment he believes it. The illusion is fragile. It breaks if you touch it. At least it does if you touch it with an unsympathetic hand. John Wisdom: *Other Minds*, 1952.

There remains Sebastian. Every time I read the book I ask myself if there is anything to him at all, and the answer is always no. The related question of what it is that drives an indolent, affected, greedy, queerish young nob to the bottle perhaps of "But it must be admitted that the whole thing looks ravishing." Well yes, but so it bloody should. From the way some of them go on you would think the camera-team had had a hand in building Christ Church or St Mark's instead of just pointing their instrument in approximately the right direction and remembering to take the cap off the snout. Any producer will tell you that keeping the public out of view is the real task.

The TV version is very good whenever it comes to the good parts of the novel, all of them significantly irrelevant to the main issue: the army scenes, the interesting short story about Julia's marriage to Mottram, the lively sketch of the General Strike, Ryder's father, Ryder's wife, Anthony Blanche, Mr Samgrass - John Gielgud, Jane Asher, Nicholas Grace, John Grillo, all first-rate. But there was not much to be done about the boredom at the centre. The mistake was in the time allotted, or in picking the book in the first place. I hope no one will draw the false conclusion that faithful adaptations of serious novels can never be successful.

The production is very thorough and professional and might even have been called stylish if it had not tried a little hard to be. It could have done without the irritating convention whereby, for instance, two people at the far end of a restaurant are audible to us but not to those at the next table. The period stuff is fun to look at and the storm at sea is fascinating. I think the music is just right, grand, sad and rather brassy.

The most disagreeable of the central trio, however, is undoubtedly Ryder, priggish, prickish, on the snail. John Beaver to Julia's Brenda. Though cautiously taciturn in company, he is loquacious enough in his asides and comments. Something of these, not much in total but too much, John Mortimer's script, preserves in voice-over. The producers evidently mistook for vivid writing the sickening floweriness of a great deal of Ryder's commentary, headlining one of his most novelistic bits of attitudinizing: "My theme is memory, that winged host that soared about me one grey morning of war-time. But as far as I remember we are spared that shaming language-of-youth stuff, also the noble wine stuff and most of the sniffy

They've been sacrificed, of course, in the interests of straightforwardness and romantic feeling, just as the story's economy has given way to richness. Television drama is getting more and more decorative; this recreation of a bygone period is the prettiest I have seen. The details are delightful - the cotton print dresses, the rust-tinted Norfolk jackets, the old black bicycle leaning against a whitewashed wall of the village shop, the gaudy covers of the *Strand* magazine spread over the living-room table, the potted rubber-plant by the pre-war radio. Jess at one point is shown reading a Cassella schoolgirls' story - *Schoolgirl Rivals*. I think, by Brenda Page (not looking quite as shiny, though, as it would have done in 1932 or thereabouts). All the set-pieces are beautifully assembled. In a church, the solemn pre-funeral procession in the driving rain, Susan Hill, who made a success of the first version, has made the most of an opportunity to write the same story twice.

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—Hermann Lea, *Observer*.

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RKP

Children's books

Learning to dwell in possibility

By Gareth B. Matthews

A father who pretends he doesn't know what is in the parcel his child has given him, feels as if he doesn't know, feels as if he is guessing, feels as if he thought it might be alive and bite him. But he doesn't really think it might be alive, he really knows that it's chocolate, he's only pretending to wonder what it is. But since he pretends to himself that he doesn't know is he only pretending? Shall we say that for the moment he forgets he knows, that for the moment he wonders? When he turns quickly to fire on the wolves who are gaining in spite of the efforts of two exhausted rocking chairs, he is really excited. He is pretending that wolves are behind but he isn't pretending he thinks that wolves are behind. He feels they are, he sort of believes they are, he half believes it. No, it isn't that he half believes it, he doesn't. It is more that just for the moment he believes it. The illusion is fragile. It breaks if you touch it. At least it does if you touch it with an unsympathetic hand. John Wisdom: *Other Minds*, 1952.

Jean Piaget sought to measure the cognitive development of children by tracking their progression towards ever more nearly adequate concepts of the world, and of its contents. Thus the child's concept of a shadow, according to Piaget in *The Child's Conception of Physical Causality*, 1930, is first the idea of stuff that emanates from objects and belongs to the night; then it is the idea of emanating dark stuff that flees the light; and only finally, years later, is it the idea of an unilluminated area produced by an object that obstructs the source of light. As with successive concepts of a shadow, so also, Piaget thought, with successive concepts of thinking, dreaming, causality, life, time, consciousness, and the rest (*The Child's Conception of the World*, 1929).

What reveals the concepts a child has at age so and so? Piaget's methods, especially in the first decades of his research, were disarmingly simple and direct: he asked children questions. But suppose their answers were not serious. Suppose the children were "romancing" or, even worse, "rotting"? Piaget found no easy way to eliminate the non-serious answer. But he remained wedded to the view that it was only the settled convictions of children, however those could be got at, that would disclose real progress in cognitive development.

The quotation from John Wisdom, with which I began, suggests a different

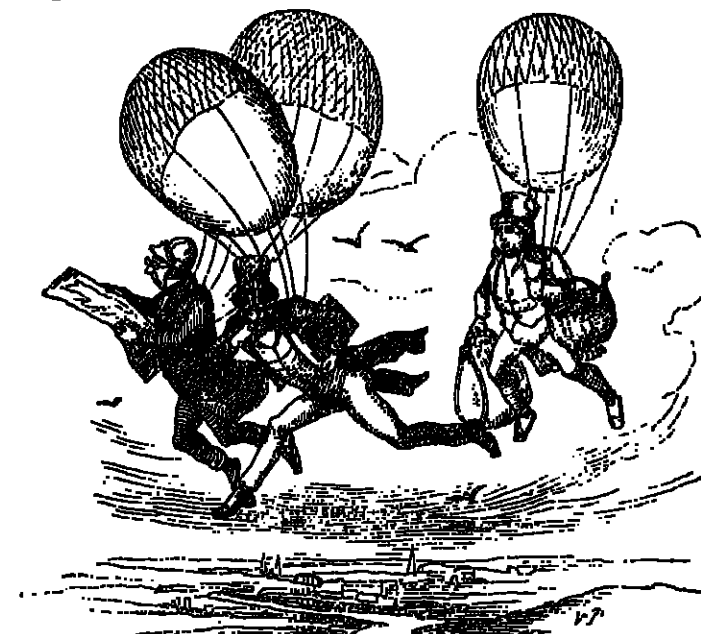
dimension to cognitive development, a dimension Piaget largely ignored. It is the dimension of what philosophers call "propositional attitudes". Take the proposition that the cow jumped over the moon. In theory, I can assume any one of a number of different attitudes towards that proposition. I can imagine, suppose, fear, hope, believe, disbelieve, pretend, pretend to believe, or be under the illusion that the cow jumped over the moon. I can also consider, wonder, or doubt whether she did, though I can't know that she did, since, in fact, it is false that the cow jumped over the moon. (I can, of course, know that that is what the cow did in the nursery rhyme, but that is something else.)

Learning how to move about among attitudes to propositions - doubting, imagining, wondering, pretending to believe - is, in Emily Dickinson's phrase, learning how to "dwell in possibility". Children's poems and stories give a child the materials to construct a rich variety of propositions. Especially if those poems and stories include literature of different genres, they also give a child practice in taking up the propositional attitudes.

These two dimensions of cognitive development, concept formation (say, getting the idea of what a shadow is) and the deployment of propositional attitudes (considering whether, or pretending to believe, that that dark area over there is a shadow) fit nicely together. Conceptual possibility is a constraint on what can be "seriously imagined", as well as, of course, a constraint on what can be believed or known. Thus one can't seriously imagine (though one can pretend to believe) that shadows owe their existence to a ubiquitous army of shadow painters; and the reason is that it belongs to the very concept of a shadow that it be, somehow, cast by the person or thing whose shadow it is.

The fit between concept clarification and the successful deployment of propositional attitudes can be illustrated further by what is said about the character, Tiktok, in L. Frank Baum's *Ozma of Oz*, a sequel to *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*. Dorothy and her companion, a talking hen, come upon Tiktok in the chamber of a rock.

He was only about as tall as Dorothy herself, and his body was round as a ball and made out of burnished copper. Also his head and limbs were copper, and these were jointed or hinged to his body in a peculiar way, with metal caps



Twenty-first-century American tourists as foreseen in 1852: it was thought that a stopover in England might last "a whole day". The drawing illustrates Hans Christian Andersen's story "In a Thousand Years' Time", which also predicts airports overcrowded with passengers, an electromagnetic cable under the Atlantic and a channel tunnel. The picture is by Vilhelm Pedersen whose work appeared in the original Danish editions of the stories. It is taken from *Tales and Stories by Hans Christian Andersen* (304pp. Seattle: University of Washington Press, £10.50, 0 295 956769 7), an annotated edition of twenty-seven stories in a new translation by Patricia L. Conroy and Sven H. Rosset intended for "the growing audience of adults". The book also contains a biography of Andersen and an introduction to his work.

over the joints, like the armor worn by knights in days of old. Tiktok's label proclaims that this "double-action, extra-responsive, thought-creating, perfect-talking mechanical man... thinks, speaks, acts and does everything but live". Can one seriously imagine that a non-living artifact, a mechanical man (or a computer), might have thoughts? Or does it belong to the very concept of a "thought-creating" being that it be alive?

The "directions for using" Tiktok say that "for thinking" he should be wound under his left arm (marked "1"), "for speaking" under his right arm ("2") and "for walking and action" he should be wound in the middle of his back ("3"). Dorothy and her friend try winding at "1". "He doesn't seem any different", the hen remarks, obviously disappointed. "Why, of course not," replies Dorothy, "he is only thinking now". To find out what he is thinking, she explains, one must wind up his

"talk". They do. "Good morning, little girl, good morning, Mrs Hen", intones Tiktok in a voice that anticipates the familiar robot speech of today.

Reflecting on Tiktok's label, and on the idea that Tiktok is not alive, Dorothy recalls the Tin Woodman of *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*. "He was alive as we are", she says,

'cause he was born a real man, and got his tin body a little at a time - first a leg and then a finger and then an ear - for the reason that he had so many accidents with his axe, and cut himself up in a very careless manner.

This argument from continuity depends upon the principle that anything that is once alive will continue to be so, even through piece-by-piece replacement, as long as its life functions are preserved. Might then a living being be made up entirely of inorganic materials? That is certainly the conclusion of the argument. But

doesn't the very concept of a living being include the provision that its materials (all? some? most?) be organic? And what then about the possibility of implanting in a living human being a mechanical heart? or kidney? or pair of eyes? What about implanting a transistorized brain? If one couldn't seriously imagine that there is a being like the Tin Woodman, then the principle that got us the unacceptable conclusion must be rejected.

Of course literature also helps us to form, refine and reflect on our attitudes towards non-propositional objects - towards nature, towards parents and siblings, towards friends and strangers, towards life. And sometimes it does this in a distinctively philosophical way. A story may invite one to consider, reflectively, whether, as John Wisdom puts it in *Philosophy and Psycho-Analysis*, a given attitude is, or is not, "well placed".

In *Tuck Everlasting* Natalie Babbitt tells us an engrossing story of a family that inadvertently drank an elixir of life and were thereby condemned to an everlasting life of never growing old. The heroine of the story has a free choice as to whether she, too, will have a similarly stunted, yet everlasting, life. Both she and the reader are nudged, gently, to the conclusion that a life worth living has a beginning, a middle and an end. (Compare the philosophical discussion of a similar story in Bernard Williams's *The Makropulos case: reflections on the tedium of immortality*, in *Problems of the Self*, 1973.) The story makes the heroine's decision an understandable one. The process in the reader of coming to find that decision understandable is a process of considering whether prevalent attitudes towards mortality are really well placed.

Tom's Midnight Garden, by Philippa Pearce, invites us to dwell in another sort of possibility. Tom, exiled to a childless uncle and aunt while his brother recovers from the measles, learns, accidentally, that he can escape the tedium of his surroundings by slipping out at midnight into a Victorian garden; in the garden he can enjoy playing with a little girl named Hatty.

The world of the midnight garden is strange in many ways. In it Tom is invisible to many people around him, though not, fortunately, to Hatty. Time itself is strange in that world. From the perspective of our world, things that take place in that world take no time at all. Moreover, Tom finds on successive visits to that

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world that, although on one occasion Flatty is actually younger than she was on his previous visit, otherwise she gets much older each time around. At the end of the story Tom meets Mrs Bartholomew, the reclusive landlady who lives in the flat at the top of the house, and discovers that she, in fact, is the Flatty with whom he has played each night of his stay.

Metaphysically, *Tom's Midnight Garden* is an exploration of the reality of time. But there is more to it than that. Partly, it is an exploration of what attitudes are appropriate to one's life. Is one's life as ephemeral as water poured out on the sand? Or is it substantial and permanent, something to which one can return, perhaps with others, as one might move about in a multi-chambered cinema that reruns "oldies"?

And what should be one's attitude towards people much older, or much younger, than oneself? We tend to see ourselves and others as though we and they were essentially young, or essentially middle-aged, or essentially old – as if Grandma had gone

through life as an eighty-two-year-old. But suppose that we, like Tom, could visit Grandma's childhood. What attitudes might we have to her then? We might come to think of the relations our life histories bear to those of others about us as accidents of birth; we might be encouraged to explore the possibilities of real friendship across large differences of age.

So in reading poems and stories, including children's poems and stories, we dwell in possibility. Learning how to do that, freely and securely, is as important a part of growing up as learning to form adequate concepts, the accomplishment Piaget and other developmental psychologists have concentrated on. Dwelling reflectively in possibility helps us to get clearer about the concepts we have already formed and about which of our attitudes towards people, places and things, even towards life itself, are well placed. Such reflectiveness is, I think, essentially philosophical; yet it is entirely natural to many non-philosophers and especially to many young children.

Ghostly forms

By Elaine Moss

DIANA WYNNE JONES:
The Time of the Ghost
Macmillan. £4.95.
0 333 32012 3

VIVIEN ALCOCK:
The Stonewalkers
Methuen. £4.95.
0 416 20700 6

Diana Wynne Jones is a prolific novelist of enormous range who can raise hairs on the back of the neck one minute, belly laugh the next. A certain untidiness and self-indulgent prolixity have characterized many of her novels to date, especially the group set in an imaginary medieval period. But she also writes about modern children, witty, abrasive, articulate, often neglected, always resilient: they need to be resilient if they are to cope with the emanations of the paranormal that threaten their lives.

Diana Wynne Jones's new novel, *The Time of the Ghost*, is one of her modern stories. The title is instantly forgettable one may think as one picks up this book but, as three hours later and in a state of bewildered admiration one lays it down again, realization dawns: the title pinpoints the theme exactly. Mrs Wynne Jones is skilfully exploring time – and the ghost.

In the conventional literary ghost

story it is the ghost of past happenings that rises, walks, haunts the present demanding retribution. Diana Wynne Jones defies this convention: for here it is from the present that a ghost returns to a period seven years past, desperate to avert a catastrophe in its own "now".

To explain, or to try to explain: the ghost that hovers unhappily among the three Melford sisters in their joyless rooms in a boys' boarding school is a lost memory, yellowish, amorphous with a voice trying always to break through. It is urgently seeking to recover its identity: is it Sally the fourth (absent) sister, and if so, why isn't it embodied? For the ghost knows Sally is not yet dead. But is a Sally-in-the-future in danger? The body of a young woman lying unconscious in a hospital bed after an accident could be that Sally of the future. The accident might have been connected with the Melfords' black magic practices (in which the boys from the school had joined). Monigan, the greedy spirit who raised, may finally be claiming the life of one of the Melfords, seven years hence. The ghost / lost memory of the young woman in the hospital bed must somehow intervene in the past to divert Monigan's curse.

Not since K. M. Briggs, that great folklorist and author of *Kate Cracker-nuts*, has the supernatural been so firmly and convincingly handled. But here the horror of dealing with evil spirits, the blood rites, the elemental disturbances lie cheek-by-jowl with a richly humorous story in which three schoolgirls, determined to catch the

attention of their over-busy parents for once, send off the fourth sister to see whether "Himself" and Phyllis will notice Sally is missing. *The Time of the Ghost* is a great feat of imaginative writing. It will be a thousand pities if, like the ghost of Sally, it fails to float over the artificial barriers of the adolescents' world to attract the attention of adults.

Vivien Alcock's *The Stonewalkers* is less complex but no less compulsive. Shorter, easier to read, it is concerned with Poppy Brown, "a child of many mothers real, House and Foster", who learns to love through the scary intervention of a stone statue that comes to life in a thunderstorm, and assumes (with an army of stone refugees) control over the lonely Poppy, leading her into considerable peril – and a situation where she has to give herself if she is to survive. The terror is real:

Their stiff fingers poked and pried, caught at her shirt and raked through her hair. One statue, pulling some strands out by the roots, held its hand up in the moonlight, the fine shinning hairs caught in its stiff fingers, stirring slightly in the wind. It seemed bemused by something so delicate and soft, and fingered its own grim, immobile curls as if dissatisfied.

Vivien Alcock's second novel confirms her as a new writer who can command plot, character, nuance and dialogue with a precision and sensitivity that sets her firmly among the elite of English fantasy authors for the young.

Extensions of reality

By Ann Evans

CATHERINE SEFTON:

Emer's Ghost
Hamish Hamilton. £4.95.
0 241 10619 2

RUTH PARK:

Playing Beatie Bow
Kestrel. £5.50.
0 7226 5771 4

To build a story for ten to twelve-year-olds around the supernatural is to court disaster; the supernatural story for this age group is such a rarity that to find two at one sitting is a bonanza. Catherine Sefton, experienced now in this field, and Ruth Park, an Australian award-winner, share the honours almost equally: while one book may excel in artistry, the other quickly catches up in warmth and readability.

Emer's Ghost is set in the author's own country – the borders of Eire and Northern Ireland, beneath the blue shadow of the Mountains of Mourne – and the story focuses on a small village community with its legend of a lost chalice, hidden from Cromwell's marauders and never recovered. To Emer, living in the present-day village with her mother and sisters, comes the ghost of the long dead girl and the realization that she, Emer, and she alone, can lay bare the mystery of the chalice. Her final ordeal, in which her own life and that of her closest sister are at risk, is a true test of her courage and selflessness; it is also a piece of writing which for sheer economy of style and intensity of drama would be hard to equal. There is about the whole of this beautifully wrought story, a timeless quality, reminiscent of *The Stone Book Quartet*. Catherine Sefton shares with Alan Garner a gift for rooting a plot so deeply in its setting that even the supernatural is a fully acceptable extension of reality, rather than some clever, superimposed trick. Add to this an uncanny insight into the workings of a child's mind, an acute ear for dialogue and an eye for the odd idiosyncrasy which stamps a character indelibly on the reader's mind, and you have a writer of a rare order. This latest book may not make box office history but it should be remembered for its sheer quality.

The ghost in *Playing Beatie Bow* is

its heroine, Abigail Park. Against the disturbing background of her parents' broken marriage there moves an ingenious plot in which the fourteen-year-old schoolgirl is spirited back to the Sydney of a hundred years ago; there she is required to live in the home of young Beatie Bow, who subsequently gave her name to the playground game in Abigail's school. Beatie's grandmother recognizes in Abigail the Stranger who alone can perpetuate their family gift of clairvoyance. How she achieves this is turned into a story of suspense and excitement, rich in humanity, shrewd observation and wit. Abigail herself is a character in the Dido Twite tradition: tender-hearted despite an astringent tongue, vulnerable behind a tough exterior, she has the courage of ten and a breezy optimism to go with it. As the pivot of the plot, she is the book's chief delight, followed closely by the marvellously Dickensian portrait of the Victorian family with whom she has to live. An exuberant book written with confident expertise, it is richly deserving the popularity it will surely have with ten to twelve-year-old girls.

The family circle

By Gillian Cross

JOAN LINGARD:

Strangers in the House
Hamish Hamilton. £4.95.
0 241 10671 0

Life has grown harder for children in books. Once there were "family stories" about the jolly adventures of middle-class children at home for the holidays. It was a cliché, but a comfortable one. Today's cliché is the re-marrying of single parents which flings their children together without warning. Like all clichés, this is potentially powerful. The sudden intrusion of new and resented members into the family circle highlights differences and generates strong emotions. The growth of the hybrid family is complex, requiring adaptation and understanding from everyone. But such complexity demands skilful development, especially if, as in *Strangers in the House*, it is the book's main subject.

Strangers in the House begins promisingly, opposing two dissimilar teenage characters, Calum, the silent country boy, devoted to his sheepdog, and Stella, the volatile town girl, furious at having to share her room with Calum's sister, Betsy. There are interesting differences, too, between the newly married parents. Willa, Calum's mother, is cautious and thrifty. Tom, Stella's father, is a happy-go-lucky journalist. They have little money and a tiny flat; but none of this is explored in depth. Instead, there is a proliferation of incidents, trivialized by lack of suspense: Calum's dog is killed; Betsy

is lost and nearly dies of exposure; Stella runs away. We are told that these events are important, but they are presented as a sequence of petty squabbles. Significantly, it is not until the last pages of the book that Calum and Stella really look at each other. Before that, they have no proper relationship.

The same is true of the many other characters: Calum's father and his new young wife; Stella's girlfriends and her aunt and uncle; Tom's acquaintances. Each group of people suggests new dimensions to the story, but the narrative flits over them without building any true dramatic structure. There is one exception. Calum falls in love with Stella's friend, Felicity, and when he is with her the hectic pace of the narrative slows and some feeling develops of the growth of a relationship, tentative at first and gradually gaining strength. It is sentimental stuff, but it is fully imagined, individual experience, reminding one of what Joan Lingard can do in this direction. Unfortunately, it merely emphasizes the frustrating thinness of the rest of the book.

The Henty Society, which exists to circulate ideas and information about G. A. Henty, the author of boys' adventure stories, has just entered its fifth year of existence. In addition to its quarterly *Bulletin*, which contains articles about Henty and other nineteenth-century authors, it also publishes a bibliography of Henty's works for collectors and historians of Victorian children's fiction. Further details of the Society can be obtained from the Secretary, Roy Henty, 60 Painswick Road, Cheltenham, Gloucestershire.

Confrontations

By Nicholas Tucker

STEVE BOWLES:

Jamie
Gollancz. £4.95.
0 575 03015 1

ANNE FINE:

Round Behind the Ice-House
Methuen. £4.95.
0 416 20820 7

Neither of these two well-written novels for older children quite works, but both are original and challenging, and even with their flaws more interesting than the safer orthodoxes of less ambitious writers.

Jamie, by Steve Bowles, concerns eight mini-adventures in the life of a young teenager, but the jocular chapter headings for each give no idea of the closely realistic way in which events are described. In the first episode, for example, Jamie's school bag goes over the garden wall by mistake, only to be followed by the daunting sound of breaking glass. But this immemorial scene from so many past children's books is not treated here as anything particularly comic. Jamie has to get his bag back from the injured party – an angry, grey-haired lady now minus a cucumber frame, who also points out "I suppose you think old people have got money to throw away." She, in her turn, wants a confrontation with Jamie's quick-tempered mother, but to avoid this Jamie finally manages to steal the bag back, avoiding trouble with the police and with his own conscience in the process.

And so it goes on, with other adventures involving stolen goods (Jamie's parents acting as willing accessories), an accident that leaves Jamie with a partially paralysed arm plus the loss of a best friend, a vicious beating-up on a rubbish dump, and even a modest, though memorable, first encounter with sex. All this is vivid and authentic enough, but the author's unwillingness to engage with his characters, neither morally nor in any other way, finally robs this novel of its other-

wise deserved impact, with detachment in the narration finally leading to similar feelings in the reader. (The actual writing, too, sometimes varies disconcertingly between adult and childish ways of putting things, with sentences such as "I would spoil their holiday if he got himself beat up.") But parts of *Jamie* still remain very good indeed, and Steve Bowles is certainly an author to keep an eye on. Throw away the book's cover, though, with its glossy photograph of a boy holding an aerosol can with which he has apparently just written the book's name on an adjacent wall. Readers should be allowed to imagine such a freshly observed hero for themselves, and who, these days, would want to do anything that their flaws more interesting than the safer orthodoxes of less ambitious writers.

Anne Fine's *Round Behind the Icehouse*, in contrast, is set deep in the countryside, and describes the relationship between a pair of adolescent twins. But once again, there is no sense of false romance: the farm is seen as an impersonal, sometimes cruel place, with the twins themselves caught up with each other in a destructive confusion of affection and resentment. All this is outlined well and convincingly; disquiet sets in, though, when the use of the first person singular is taken to such an extent that the "I" of the narrator begins to appear on each page with the monotony of telegraph poles seen from a train window. Certainly, adolescents frequently do think and write like this, but self-absorption does not always attract interest from others, and there are moments when Tom – the omnipresent ego – goes on too much for his, or our, own good. Yet there are passages of genuine power and feeling in this novel, and it is nice to see the twin relationship stripped, for a change, of its immediate glamour and shown as something altogether more complex and sometimes even daunting. There are distinct rewards here for readers who persevere with this occasionally disappointed and highly emotional narrative, and Anne Fine too is clearly a good novelist who should go on to write even better books.

Orphan lives

By Jennifer Moody

CATHERINE STORR:

Vicky
Faber. £4.95.
0 571 11762 7

MARA KAY:

Lolo
Macmillan. £4.95.
0 333 31732 7

The two heroines of the novels under review, are girls who, by reason of adoption or illegitimacy, do not quite belong where they find themselves. Lacking the security of a normal family life, they look on from the outside like Dickensian orphans, noses to the window panes.

In *Vicky*, Catherine Storr has examined tenderly and sensitively the complex emotions of an adopted daughter. Vicky has always known that she was adopted at birth after her mother died in hospital. At the death of her loved and loving adoptive mother, the occasional murmurings of concern over her real heritage become pressing. There are few clues; but with the help of a policeman friend, a smudged photograph and a delicately knitted shawl, she tracks down a teacher and confidante of her mother, who is indeed probably her own unknown father's mother. Ms Storr has over the years written a distinguished series of books for the younger reader, many exploring the nature of girls on the brink of growing up, hesitant, unsure, apprehensive, perceptive. *Vicky* is I think the best of them all; the author deals with the ambivalence of her heroine's position, her need to know about herself and her concern not to hurt those who love her, with honesty and delicacy, and has surrounded the central figure with a

range of totally credible, three-dimensional characters, each of whom could well stand alone as a subject for future work. Altogether a book of great maturity and insight.

In *Lolo* Mara Kay has returned again to that period of history which she evokes for the reader with elegance and clarity – nineteenth century and pre-Revolutionary Russia. Lolo is the natural daughter of one of the great Russian poets, Feodor Ivanovitch Tyutchev. Her mother has had a long standing union with Lolo's father, who has however a legal wife with whom he spends most of his time. Because of the irregular nature of her parents' relationship, Lolo is denied time and again the chance to live a social life of any normality. She makes friends, receives invitations, only to have them removed when those inviting her become aware of her equivocal status. The family moves from flat to flat, living sometimes abroad, sometimes in Saint Petersburg; Tyutchev calls occasionally, ignores Lolo's younger brothers, receives reproaches from Lolo's mother. Only when she is placed in Madame Truba's school does the poor child know anything like contentment; even that is removed when a meddling parent declares that Lolo's father cannot have provided for her and that the child must learn a demeaning trade to support herself. Lolo runs home, catches consumption and dies, as her mother already has and as her younger brother is soon to do.

Ms Kay writes with conviction and erudition. There is no problem for the reader in feeling how inevitable it is that Lolo should be treated in this way; there is no problem in seeing just how delightful life would be if she were accepted fully. It is a pathetic tale, with a tear-jerking end; Ms Kay can congratulate herself on having re-created a truly believable person.

Revelations

By Cara Chanteau

KATHERINE PATERNON:

Jacob Have I Loved
Gollancz. £4.95.
0 575 02961 7

MARY TREADGOLD:

Journey From the Heron
Cape. £4.95.
0 224 01970 8

Jacob Have I Loved, which has won Katherine Paterson her second Newbery Medal is, as indicated by the title, a saga of sibling rivalry. The story is set during the Second World War, on the lonely island of Rass where life is ruled by the sea, and morals by Methodist principles. Wheeze, or Sarah Louise as she prefers to be known, grows up in the shadow cast by her younger twin Caroline – a gifted singer, popular, beautiful, inevitably golden-haired. Poor Wheeze is driven ever further into the unreasoning resentment and vengeful sense of injustice to which those of thirteen plus are prone. Indeed, there is sometimes the impression that the war itself (in its rare appearances) is an additional set

of malice personally directed against her.

Only when Caroline leaves the island to seek her fortune, does Louise arrive at a recognition of love and acceptance, working as a waterman with her father. But by then, she realizes that she too must find her own place in the world. Her real moment of revelation comes when, as a midwife delivering twins, she finds herself striving to save the frail child (her sister), and almost neglecting the stronger (herself). To some readers this will look like "knowing the place for the first time" but to others it may seem merely coming full circle. Perhaps the best clue to this book lies in the dedication: "I wish it were Emma . . .". *Jacob Have I Loved* can arouse the same sense of discomfiture, but does not share Emma's elegance and poise.

More closely linked to the effects of war – this time the First World War – is Mary Treadgold's *Journey From the Heron*. Although Betsy Barrow, the heroine, is thirteen the book is not so feverishly about the problems of growing up. Despite the distant thunder of guns from across the Channel, Betsy's world is essentially secure: governed by the rules

of sentiment and just deserts.

The novel chronicles an eventful week spent in London when Betsy leaves the familiar surroundings of the Heron, an old Sussex house turned military hospital, to make way for three VADs. In wartime London with its raids, wounded Tommies and gin grannies "a bit upsy-woo at closing time", Betsy stays with her great Auntie Ba who sells the rich's cast-off clothes to keep herself and her invalid grandson, Tom, Betsy meets and befriends Linda, a plucky crippled girl, and Johnny Bridgehouse whose German father is at the Front fighting for the "Enemy". In the typical and satisfying way of a children's story, Betsy and Linda get involved in a slightly improbable adventure and save the day for the adults. The villains in this tale are not the Germans, but two Irish half-brothers whose involvement in espionage is just a natural extension of their malevolence. The Germans in the form they generally appear – prisoners of war, law-abiding expatriates mistreated by a vicious society – emerge as the victims. Although a more naive book than *Jacob Have I Loved*, *Journey From the Heron* possesses an innocence and occasional moral depth belied by its simple form.

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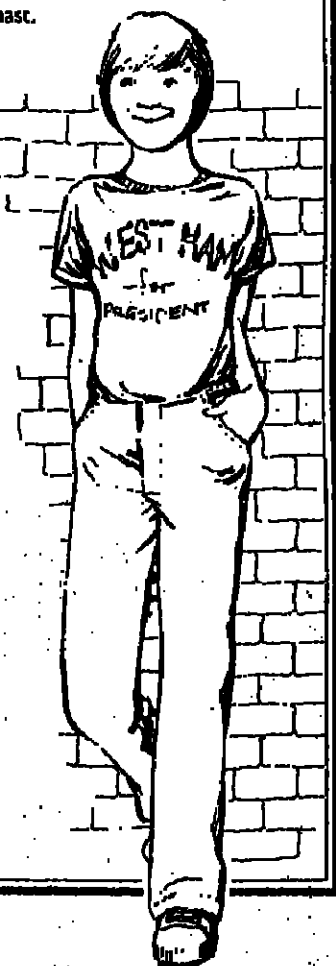
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Gold fever

By Ann Thwaite

IVAN SOUTHALE:
The Golden Goose
Methuen, £5.50.
0 416 21360 X

Ivan Southale has never cared a great deal about what people think of him, neither his child readers nor his reviewers. "The reader must come to me, I cannot go to the reader", he once wrote, and he has referred to "the barbed wire entanglement" through which his books must make their way. So we should not be surprised, at a time when we are told on every hand that children don't read historical novels, that Southale in his new trilogy has turned to writing about the past. *King of the Steaks* (1979) started the story of thirteen-year-old Custard living on a remote homestead in Australia in the 1850s. It's an elusive, difficult book with

something of the quality of a fable and a self-conscious, highly wrought style, more fanciful than Mark Twain's but with some of the humour and raciness of *Huckleberry Finn*.

They are a strange lot, Custard's family and preacher Tom and his sons. "No one that Custard knew was not slightly mad at best." At the end of the first book, the boy is captured by the Preacher's sons, because they have heard of his gifts of divination. The "steaks" find not only water for him but also gold, and "a madness comes over a man at the thought of gorgeous gold".

The publishers have decked out *The Golden Goose* in a glittering cover but, as we know, all that glitters is not gold. And the novel, though it stands on its own well enough, and is indeed more accessible than the first part, is rather a disappointment. Southale is a brave writer, never afraid to try something new, but for all their eccentricities the characters are mere puppets. The

style gets between us and them so that we find it difficult to care what happens to them as they rush west on the search for gold. We should sympathize with Custard. There is always some fella expecting me to make him rich and I ain't even got a pair of socks." But we are often as frustrated as Custard himself.

Even the narrative is submerged in the style, in the repetitions and antitheses, so that it is sometimes quite difficult to know exactly what is going on. There is, however, one splendid scene when Custard's mother, the redoubtable Rebecca (who once shot off the hand of a persistent wooer) comes riding to Custard's rescue, flanked by the Law's troopers, but not forgetting to correct the boy's grammar.

It seems to me, though of course it will not seem so to Southale himself, that it is he, not his reviewer, who is putting up the "barbed wire entanglements". It is hard work getting through, but some may well think the journey worth making.

Various voices

By Edward Blishen

SARA AND STEPHEN CORRIN:
The Faber Book of Modern Fairy Tales
Faber £5.95.
0 571 11768 6

The first thing to say is that here are fifteen well-chosen stories: and that would be true whatever flag they would be under. I imagine having the book at the age of nine or ten or eleven and how I'd have sunk into it, and in it for days, and been delighted by its variety of voices.

The second thing to say, which would be of no interest at all to its young readers, is how, having been assembled because they have done much the same thing, the authors demonstrate their differences. For a statement of the compilers' aims we have to rely on the blurb on the dustjacket, there being no preface. It was to gather original stories written during the last hundred years, "all entirely characteristic of their authors", and yet all owing "something to the traditional fairy tale". One might expect pastiche - the debt glaring. In fact, it's the one or two stories that do here and there seem to exploit the generalized air of fairy tale - being merely wonderful - that are the least successful. The rest bring their authors' special qualities to bear on magical narratives. They didn't set out to write fairy tales, but to write a story by Laurence Houseman, Helen Cresswell, Joan Aiken, and so on.

So in Thurber's splendid tale, "The Great Quillow", there's all his love of verbal oddities, his ironical feeling for the impotence of the large when faced with the cunning of the small. In Eleanor Farjeon's "The Clumber Pup", the dialogue has the rhythms and repetition characteristic of the traditional tale, but also that texture of honest reality that appears

in everything she wrote. F. Anstey approaches his story "The Good Little Girl" from a most dangerous angle: he is using the conventions of the fairy tale for satirical purposes. The tale, on which his own is a comic gloss, is the one about the child rewarded for her virtue with the gift of spilling precious stones out of her mouth when she speaks. This happens to priggish Priscilla: and she's courted and housed for that reason by her avaricious Aunt Margarine. But a visit to the jeweller's with the gems, eagerly collected by Aunt Margarine's entire family, ends appallingly: the stones are found to be false. One remembers that Anstey hung the most famous of his stories on a wry perception of what the traditional opportunities of the fairy tale might lead to - and especially the handling of precious or semi-precious stones - if slightly misplaced in setting or timing.

And then there are the writers who, one feels, would have been among coiners of the original fairy tales, if history had allowed it. Even so, Philippa Pearce's "The Squirrel Wife" has the note of severe tenderness typical of her; and Walter de la Mare's "The Lord Fish" the magical particularity of place and time that haunts and holds together all he wrote, whether supposedly modern in setting or supposedly timeless. The only serious quarrel I have with Jan Strangely, who did the drawings here, is that her imprisoned lady's face in "The Lord Fish" - an "odd small face", as de la Mare said in some form of words or another about almost all the beloved women's faces in his poetry or his prose - is not quite odd and small enough.

The book begins with what is arguably the most truly modern fairy tale ever written: Ted Hughes's "The Iron Man". For some reason only three of the five chapters of this remarkable story are printed. It's like lopping off the last two acts of *Hamlet*. But I guess few readers will rest until they've run down the thing complete.

Neugebauer Press Publishing Ltd, London and Alphabet Press, Boston have recently published an edition of *Fables de La Fontaine*. The book is produced as a facsimile of the original vellum manuscript which has lettering and illuminations by Marie Angel. *Fables de La Fontaine* contains the French text of seventeen of the best known fables and it is

accompanied by an English rhyming version of the tales by Sir Edward Marsh ("One fault from which the *Fables* is free is making loans too readily") which was first published in 1954 and which will be familiar to the book and the translation, which is bound separately, are sold together in a slip-case (0 90723410 0) and priced at £15.

Tendencies to wildness

By Alan Brownjohn

MARGARET MAHY:
Raging Robots and Unruly Uncles
Illustrated by Peter Stevenson
Dent, £3.95.
0 460 06073 2

ROBERT NYE:
Harry Pay the Pirate
Hamish Hamilton, £4.95.
0 241 10672 9

JONATHAN GATHORNE-HARDY:
Cyril Bonhamy v Madam Big
Illustrated by Quentin Blake
Cape, £4.50.
0 234 01991 0

There is no shortage of moderately original fantasy in almost any new crop of stories for children. But what often causes one story to stand out above others is a particular kind of adroitness and selectivity in handling detail - discretion must hold tendencies to wildness in check - and a special dimension of intelligence. Margaret Mahy's *Raging Robots and Unruly Uncles* has, superficially, a look of decidedly heavy-handed exuberance. Yet appearances deceive. This little tale marshals its array of zany incidents and odd characters with absorbing skill, and offers a moral fable of exceptional ingenuity and wit.

Uncle Jasper strives in vain to bring up his seven sons (Calligula, Nero, Genghis, Tarquin, etc) in villainy, and the good Uncle Julian despairs of ever making his one daughter, the exemplary Prudence, quite virtuous enough. To create an especially subtle kind of havoc, the lads devise a perfect walking and talking doll which will outdo Prudence in goodness, and send it to

Uncle Julian. Prudence (she is very good at electronics) constructs in turn a thieving and destructive robot which will outstrip Uncle Jasper and the boys in wickedness. Both households find Frankenstein, or evil, taken to their absolute extremes, become impossible to perform, and also tedious; though there still has to be, in Uncle Jasper's words, "the dark and the light that keep the balance of the world between them".

In the end, of course, an ingenious happiness is contrived, with all the children tamed into useful (though wonderfully odd citizens, the robots given vocations of their own, and the uncles brought to recognize their own excesses. Margaret Mahy has compressed her intricate and eventful plot into an even smaller space than seems possible, since Peter Stevenson's broadly (and successfully) humorous illustrations must take up about one-third of the book. She runs through an extraordinary range of weird happenings, and yet lapses into scarcely a syllable of over-used material or facile obviousness. Her prose is both elegant and racy; and this brief, hilarious book offers many moments of the purest delight.

All the suitable ingredients appear to be there in *Harry Pay the Pirate*, and yet the mixture disappointingly fails to rise. Robert Nye gives promise of some straight, unpretentious, even frankly traditional tale-telling in his early pages: Harry dreams of being a pirate, meeting a strange flute-playing black man, and falling in love with the King of Spain's daughter. This could be a conventional tale of the pursuit of one heart's desire, with the addition of the sweep and colour of this author's best work in prose and poetry. And yet it reads thinly. The nebulous Mr

Shadow, a *deus ex machina* who accompanies every voyage of Harry's pirate ship, the *Miss Rebecca*, is much too heavily symbolic to fit into the story comfortably. Only one of Harry's motley pirate crew, the peg-legged Woody Sam, is developed as a rounded character. The well-prepared surprises in the plotting evaporate strangely when the secret is out, the climaxes in the action lack genuine excitement. Robert Nye could not write dully, but fairy tales of this sort require a luminosity and a sureness of touch which *Harry Pay the Pirate* lacks.

Jonathan Gathorne-Hardy's Cyril belongs to the breed of lovably lazy heroes who win through far more by accident than design. Readers may enjoy a writer hero who is penniless, yet will do anything to avoid work, and is good at little else beside books; though writers themselves may wonder if Gathorne-Hardy is not letting the side down? Cyril's desperate attempts to fail in his employment as a Father Christmas in a department store - attacking children, distributing too many presents, reading or dozing in the Wendy House - are told with brisk cheerfulness; and Cyril stumbles accidentally on a vast plot to infiltrate stores up and down the country with hundreds of burglars in similar garb. *Cyril Bonhamy v Madam Big* (the latter is the monstrous criminal behind the whole affair, though she enters the tale too late to seem particularly vivid or horrendous) is a fast and uncomplicated fantasy with a vigorous vein of humour. But its stock of invention is no greater than the elaboration of an expected vein; yet the literary police commissioner who writes florid letters to Mrs Bonhamy may seem funnier to some than the SAS men who burst in on the crooks in Santa Claus disguises.

Familiar faces

By Judith Elkin

BEVERLY CLEARY:
Ramona Quimby, Age 8
Hamish Hamilton, £4.95.
0 241 10665 6

TOM TULLY:
Look Out . . . It's Little Ed!
Warne, £3.95.
0 7232 2767 5

Stories from one book to another but many children will enjoy the feeling of having lived through similar events with Ramona before.

Look Out . . . It's Little Ed! is also one of a series about the same main character, a rather abnoxious child who is editor of his school magazine. But, in contrast to the Ramona books, the Little Ed books belong to some of the worst traditions of pulp writing. The tone of this latest title is infuriatingly patronizing, most of the incidents in the

book are unbelievably silly and the adults, particularly the school teachers, are made to look quite ridiculous. There is the Deputy Head of the school who is obsessed by the accuracy of the predictions in Little Ed's horoscope; the local newspaper reporter, who is fooled into believing that aliens from outer space are about to land in the area and a ridiculous bookshop owner and children's book writer who come to blows when Little Ed creates uproar at their Book Fair.

Playing safe

By Josephine Karavasil

RUSSELL HOBAN:
The Great Fruit Gum Robbery
0 416 05790 X
They Came from Aargh!
0 416 05840 X
Illustrated by Colin McNaughton
Methuen/Walker, £2.95 each.

Publishers seem to be playing safe at the moment and artists are spreading their work around in order to survive. Little books by big names, often not published by the artist's usual publisher, seem fashionable, and *The Great Fruit Gum Robbery* and *They Came from Aargh!* are in this group.

Many artists undeniably do better under certain editors than others and Colin McNaughton, with his illustrations for these two books, is a case in point. Whoever moulded him before, must have had the right touch and sense to have controlled his choice and depth of colour. Not so with the garish colours used here. The artist may have been trying to use more popular colours to fit in with his comic strip approach to the stories. But the overall effect is unbelievably boring - pink, cyan, green, pink - even though the printer might be to blame for some of the pinker excesses of *Aargh*.

Each book is a dressing-up tale with a basic story line and language which is on the whole imaginative

and fun. In *Robbery*, the king of the desert keeps his fruit gums from the underwriter diver only to find that the baby nips off with them and eats them all. In *Aargh*, the spaceship homes in on "the place of the chocolate cake", which the mumosaurus calls earth, and takes off again, the cake eaten and the mission completed. Racy stories, you might think, with which a young reader could identify. Well, if you were male and white you might. There are no girls at all in these two books. In each of the books the adult female does nothing but cook for her three active boys. And the people are as white as white (though coloured very pink - see above). There might be a place for yet more dressing-up stories if they reflected something of our present society, but these two don't. The characters were kept white perhaps because the publisher had co-productions in mind. Certainly, the ugly, caricatured faces of the boys are reminiscent of a style of illustration that was popular in Germany three years ago.

This said, there are touches of magic in both the artwork and the stories - the Heath Robinsonesque spaceship made out of ordinary household things like dustbin lids and brooms and the comic strip boxes broken to give the effect of a diver under water and the "asymmetrical shock horror" fond of milk, purrs" might tweak out the odd laugh.

Endings as beginnings

By Dominic Hibberd

ALISON MORGAN:
Paul's Kite
Chatto and Windus, £4.95.
0 7011 2594 2

SIMON FRENCH:
Canilly, Canilly
Angus and Robertson £3.25.
0 207 14432 X

Paul's Kite is a conventional book but a good one. As usual in this particular convention, the hero is a tough, independent eleven-year-old, with a feckless mother, a missing father and relations who care more than they seem to. There is the familiar contrast between urban and rural values, the pet girl cousin who turns out to be a brick, the sinig uncle who's actually an embezzler, the benevolent old men who appear from nowhere just when they're wanted - and so on. But all this is

huddled with freshness and insight. Paul, moving within a pattern of adult relationships and London streets which he sees with a child's acute but only half-perceiving eye. Alison Morgan, writing now with justified confidence, does not feel obliged to explain everything. We can see for ourselves the strategy old Mr Abraham uses to persuade Paul to go home after a day of disasters. We also sense that the old man is a wizard, just as the delightfully unexpected old lady who helps Paul with his symbolic kite is undoubtedly a fairy - and this indicates the real convention in which the book is written. Not that the supernatural is ever referred to. What is referred to, Wales, actually the subject of an earlier book (*Leaving Home*), a misty dimension beyond the present London volume. One looks twice at the cover before noticing that behind the tall buildings of Bayswater there rises a cloudy Welsh mountain, but the soaring kite sees both places and looks further still to the third book (for there will be one, surely), in

which Paul's father will come back from America to find his son at last. The story pauses but does not finish; the old lady says, "Beginnings are better than endings".

Canilly, Canilly (not the best of titles) is about yet another tough etc. who finds his feet (they always do). This "kid" does it by playing football in Australia. For an adult British reader, the most interesting thing in the book is its portrait of Australian provincial life, with its combination of strangeness and familiarity. Trevor lives in a caravan with his roving parents, who are intelligent 1960s drop-outs; his author belongs to the 1970s and so sympathizes with Trevor's predicament. The boy needs a home, since he belongs neither to the rigidly conformist town nor to the rootless culture of his parents. But Simon French could do with some more practice; he achieves his effects rather crudely and does not complete his value-testing. The family suddenly leaves the town for a house which they happen to own somewhere. That's too easy an ending to be convincing as a beginning.

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Translated from an anonymous German ballad

When I was a little lad
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There I met the King's young daughter.
She, too, walked the street.
'Come in, come in, little son of a fiddler.
Play me a tune sweet.'

It lasted scarcely a quarter of an hour.
The King he saw me singing.
'You rogue, you thief, what is that song
That to my child you're bringing?
In France there is a gallows built
Whereon you'll soon be swinging.'

In but the space of three short days
I had to climb the ladder.
'Oh give to me my fiddle to play,
For I'll not live hereafter.'

Then bowed I to, then bowed I fro,
On all the four strings telling.
A fine death lament played I,
And the King's tears were falling.

'My daughter is yours, little fiddler's son.
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Matching the words

By Ann Martin

It is difficult to assess such a plethora of picture books. Usually the illustrations are excellent; but this superior artwork is, alas, often allied to less than limpid prose: some publishers are too easily beguiled by pretty pictures into thinking any old words will do. This particularly seems to be the case with imports: a number of the poorer books come from Europe and one does wonder why they are brought here. While it is obviously difficult to balance encouragement for deserving newcomers with desirably high standards, surely now, when tales of publishing woes abound, it is time for a little more discrimination. That said, there are still many excellent books around, matching imaginative pictures with well-chosen words. Often, too, the illustrations are good enough to carry a poorer-quality text.

Leon Garfield is well known as a writer for older children; now he has extended his range to the six or seven year olds. *Fair's Fair*, a story of two wails in Victorian London, who are rescued from the slums by a big black dog and who then prove to be "kind, brave, patient, honest and generous", as required by their benefactor, is written with his usual pungency, well-matched by the slightly grotesque pictures, with their Dickensian overtones. There is plenty of reading here, as there is in *Operation Hedgehog*, a gentle little book prettily illustrated in soft watercolours. Nobby loves hedgehogs and learns how to rescue them from the nearby cattle grid; an occasional use of dialect does not ring true but otherwise this is a nicely written story. Fun, too, are the *Just How Stories*, written initially as a school project, and then illustrated: the result is a varied collection of considerable charm which should certainly appeal to other children.

With Rodney Peppé we are back with an expert and his latest book, *The Mice Who Lived in a Shoe*, is well up to a standard; this picture story of the mice who build themselves a house in a shoe, able to withstand heat, cold - and the cat - is simply written and properly elaborated by the detailed pictures; older siblings will enjoy the humorous asides. Brian Wildsmith is another

favourite and *Bear's Adventure* is excellent. While two balloonists picnic, a bear climbs into their basket for a snooze and is carried away to a succession of rapid and hilarious adventures. Easy for a small child to follow, the lavish use of colour in the graphic pictures ensures success. Nor should Gerald Rose need any introduction; in *How George Lost His Voice*, his latest hero is grumpy until he loses his voice; then everything begins to answer back. There is plenty of humour in the words and cartoon-like pictures. A newcomer in the same field is Bob Wilson, making an amusing beginning with *Stanley Bagshaw and the Fourteen-Foot Wheel*. Stanley, set to watch the bicycle-wheel machine, falls asleep; it goes wrong, and he has chase the resulting wheel through the town. Told cartoon-strip fashion with a text reminiscent of Stanley Holloway's monologues, the book is great fun.

Three traditionally-derived stories have genuine charm. *The Gossipy Wife*, a simply written cautionary tale from Russia, is illustrated by Amanda Hall with a strong Russian flavour. The next *The Princess on the Rug* is a sequel to Hans Andersen's perfect princess. This princess sleeps soundly on a nut under ten mattresses and is sought by the prince who finds his mother too perfect. This German import is delightfully pictured as a Victorian fable, while the translation is slyly comic. From Switzerland comes *The Lonely Prince*, who is unhappy until he finds a friend; this well-written tale has plenty of colour.

Other imports are worth consideration. *The Snowman who went for a Walk* is from Germany, told a trifely whimsically but accompanied by the detailed pictures small children love; the double-page spread of a traffic jam, every inch crowded with cars and people, is particularly good. Also from Germany is *Piro and the Fire Engine*, pleasantly told with bright, humorous illustrations. Humour is also foremost in *A Pet for Mrs Arbuckle*: the Australian heroine advertises for a pet and travels the world to inspect those who answer, ending up, however, with the neighbouring cat. From the same country comes a parody of the

battle of Trafalgar, *The Tale of Admiral Mouse*; the mice are delightfully painted and very engaging; it is rather coy but may well please some. *Only the Best* is from America; it is a glossy, well-illustrated little morality tale with a specifically Jewish setting which adds considerable interest to this description of a father's search for the perfect gift for his first-born son. Two other books deserve some consideration. *The Magic Bubble Trip* and *My Cat Kipper*, the first for its grotesque but engaging illustrations of a boy's escape from a high rise flat to a world of frogs, and the latter for a

reasonable story of a boy helped through measles by his new cat. Fantasy, as much as any other genre, needs its own mad logic; there is none in the next four books. In *House by Mouse* Doris Smith paints charmingly but needs better material. *Princess Kalina and the Hedgehog* evokes Stewelpeter, but what a dreadful plot! It is practically non-existent as is the case in both *The Mysterious Railway and Toin and Tina*. Why on earth did anyone bother with these? Two other British books are equally feeble in their fantasy: in both *The Impossible Day*

and *The Impossible Night* the text is simply an excuse for a random set of pictures.

But to end on a cheerful note, *Fabulous Beasts* does not really belong in the picture-book group; its appeal is far broader. A selection of mythical animals ranges from the familiar unicorn or dragon to such a rarely as the catoblepas from Egypt (busy tormenting St Anthony). The formal paintings are as delicate and clearly coloured as the medieval illuminations they resemble, and the accompanying descriptions are anecdotal and delightful. This is a book to keep.

LEON GARFIELD: *Fair's Fair*. Illustrated by Margaret Chamberlain. Macdonald. £3.25. 0 354 08126 8.

MARGARET LANE: *Operation Hedgehog*. Illustrated by Patricia Casey. Methuen/Walker. £3.95. 0 416 05920 1.

MAX BOLLIGER: *The Lonely Prince*. Translated by Lucy Meredith. Illustrated by Jörg Obnst. Methuen. £3.95. 0 416 21590 4.

MIRA LOBE: *The Snowman who went for a Walk*. Translated by Peter Carter. Illustrated by Winfried Oppenorth. Oxford University Press. £3.95. 0 19 279759 X.

KURT BAUMANN: *Piro and the Fire Engine*. Translated by Marion Koenig. Illustrated by Jiri Bernard. Faber. £3.95. 571 11843 7.

GWENDA SMYTH: *A Pet for Mrs Arbuckle*. Illustrated by Ann James. Hamish Hamilton. £4.24. 0 241 10543 9.

MEGUIDO ZOLA: *Only the Best*. Illustrated by Valerie Littlewood. Julia MacRae Books. £4.95. 0 8620 3047 1.

BERNARD STONE: *The Tale of Admiral Mouse*. Illustrated by Tony Ross. Andersen Press. £3.50. 0 86264 009 1.

INGRID AND DIETER SCHUBERT: *The Magic Bubble Trip*. Hutchinson. £3.95. 0 09 137780 3.

SIGRID BAUER: *My Cat Kipper*. Translated by U. Watson. Anderson Press. £3.95. 0 905478 90 8.

JEANNETTE B. FLOT: *Princess Kalina and the Hedgehog*. Adapted by Frances Marshall. Illustrated by Dorothea Duntze. Faber. £1.50. 0 571 11844 5.

GEORGE MENDOZA: *House by Mouse*. Illustrated by Doris Smith. André Deutsch. £2.95. 0 233 97377 X.

KOEN FOSSEY: *The Mysterious Railway*. Macdonald. £3.95. 0 354 08138 1.

COLETTE DEMEZ: *Toin and Tina in Topsy-turvy Town*. Illustrated by Marie-Josée Sacré. Wheaton. £3.95. 0 08 027866 3.

MARINA WARNER: *The Impossible Day* 0 416 05770 5. *The Impossible Night* 0 416 05850 7. Illustrated by Malcolm Livingstone. Methuen/Walker. £3.95 each.

ALISON LURIE: *Fabulous Beasts*. Illustrated by Monika Reiser. Jonathan Cape. £3.95. 0 224 01971 6.

Gifts in season

By Brian Baumfield

Despite the commercials and the sentiment, Christmas remains a time of excitement and fun for children. Spending most of the year surrounded by slick offerings from television encompassing sex, violence and space age razzamattaz there is a curious comfort to be found in a return to the familiar traditional Santa beaming away in the bookshops. In the stories there can be little that is new or original, so it is in the presentation and packaging that publishers make their sales pitch. Teachers look for new ideas, parents look for presents. The delight of children lies in doing, singing, dancing, playing, decorating and reading. The collection of Christmas material covers most of these activities, and the first batch consists of things to do. *Here Comes Christmas* is a novel stocking filler in the form of a cassette of poems, songs and carols, and an original story. It offers an appealing half hour and is good value. A new version of the ever popular cut-out books is *The Christmas Pageant* by Tomie de Paola. It contains the story of the Nativity in eight small pages of simple figures to be cut and coloured - at £1.25 it is both slight and expensive.

Better value is a fun and games "activity pack" called *Christmas is Coming*. Amongst its contents there is an advent calendar, "thank you" cards to make, games, decorations, puzzles, a nativity frieze complete with crib, and a record of songs and carols.

A piano book of easy to play carols *Play and Sing - It's Christmas*, sets out with the aid of easy diagrams and simplified notation to encourage children to play an accompaniment for the most popular carols. It is attractively illustrated, and the hinged spine (though not conducive to rough handling) enables it to stay flat when propped against the piano.

Follow the *Star* by Mala Powers is a glossy publication of stories and legends from all over the world, which takes the young reader through each

day of Advent and Christmas. Each story is preceded by a full page colour illustration having a stained glass window at the central motif. These are crude though undeniably colourful, and it is a pleasant change to find clear black printing of the text. Some of the tales are unusual, and the sources varied, but the total effect is rather cloying: suitable for girls of seven to nine.

The Christmas Book is a straightforward anthology of stories, puzzles, customs and practical advice. It appears for the fourth year in revised form. The layout is admirably clear, the illustrations colourful if common place. It is aimed at the seven to eleven age group.

The most complete book in this group - and indeed the most substantial in the whole collection is *The Oxford Christmas Book for Children* with an appeal for a rather older age group - it contains some original pieces, including an account by Dr Sheila Cassidy of her Christmas in a Chilean prison. Other distinguished contributors are Charles Causley, Roy Fuller, Anthony Thwaite and Keith Waterhouse. There is much fascinating background on such topics as Christmas cards, crackers and the yule log. There are many attractive illustrations, both in colour and black and white, although the book has a slightly old-fashioned air. It is rather like a pedigree version of the annuals of yesterday. Nevertheless it is full of good things that owe nothing to fashion and which should give pleasure to all the family.

The remaining four books are primarily picture books for younger readers. *Lucy and Tom's Christmas* by Shirley Hughes is a slight account of the ritual of family Christmas and as such has a comforting air reflected in the cosy, uncluttered drawings of domestic contentment.

By contrast, the poem *The Night before Christmas* has been illustrated by Tomie de Paola in a precise and stylized form. Each page is bordered by patterns based on the quilts of New England. The formality of the pictures

goes well with the rhythmic pattern of the poem, which was written by Clement Moore in 1822. *How Brown Mouse Kept Christmas* - by Clyde and Wendy Watson is a modest but pleasing little story, attractively illustrated for five to seven year olds. *A Day to Remember* has no real plot; it tells in pictures of a day in a town in Holland in the nineteenth century before the feast of Saint Nicholas as the children look forward and the people go about their business. The illustrations by Anton Pieck are quite enchanting with a true fairy tale quality. A delightful present for a book-collecting uncle.

There is a great demand for good quality books dealing with the theme of Christmas, and this collection will be welcomed by schools, nurseries, play groups and libraries - not to mention the children themselves.

Here Comes Christmas. Macdonald £2.75. 0 356 07541 9 (cassette) 0 356 07543 5 (pack).

TOMIE DE PAOLA: *The Christmas Pageant Cut-Out Book*. Methuen £1.25. 0 416 24500 5.

Christmas is Coming. Macdonald. £2.95. 0 356 07197 9 (record) 0 356 07559 0 (pack).

Play and Sing - It's Christmas. Collier Macmillan. £1.95. 0 02 04542 0.

MALA POWERS: *Follow the Star*. Hodder and Stoughton. £4.95. 0 340 26696 1.

The Christmas Book. Macdonald. £2.95. 0 356 05914 6.

RODRICK HUNT (Editor): *The Oxford Christmas Book for Children*. Oxford University Press. £5.95. 0 19 278104 9.

SIMILEY HUGHES: *Lucy and Tom's Christmas*. Gollancz. £3.95. 0 575 02970 6.

CLEMENT MOORE: *The Night Before Christmas*. Illustrated by Tomie de Paola. Oxford University Press. £3.95. 0 19 279758 1.

CLYDE AND WENDY WATSON: *How Brown Mouse Kept Christmas*. Hamish Hamilton. £3.95. 0 241 10505 6.

BERNARD STONE: *A Day to Remember*. Illustrated by Anton Pieck. Ernest Benn. £3.95. 0 510 00113 0.

First encounters with literature

By Kicki Moxon Browne

Nursery rhymes are often a child's first encounter with literature. There must be hundreds of illustrated nursery rhymes on the market, and new ones appear all the time. *B. B. Blacksheep and Company* contains most of the standard nursery rhymes, and I found it both amusing and with a flavour of its own: "To market, to market" shows a pig in the passenger seat of a lorry, snugly resting his elbow on the open window, and "Three blind mice" are sugar mice on a cake, in the process of having their tails cut off with a carving knife. There are plenty of extra touches to ponder upon, such as the "illuminated" initial letters: the J in "Jack and Jill" is made up of a vinegar bottle and a strip of brown paper, and the P in "Polly put the kettle on" is a tea strainer standing on end. It seems a pity, though, that only about a third of the nursery rhymes in the book are illustrated. My young test consumers found it confusing to look at a picture of "Hey diddle diddle, the cat and the fiddle" at the same time as listening to "Old Mother Hubbard". It would have been better to illustrate them all, even if that meant including fewer rhymes.

This Little Piggy is entirely devoted to what must be the best known of all nursery rhymes. Veteran illustrator William Stobbs's paintings of a family of pigs in a country cottage are intriguingly contrasted with what appear to be photographs of oriental rugs in a collage effect, giving depth and richness to his new, delicate style. The little piggy that cried wee-wee-wee is not the usual character, but a free spirit bounding through the fields with his flute in a flurry of butterflies and musical notes. I particularly liked the cat which appears in most pictures, nonchalantly stalking every conceivable bit of wildlife.

Also by William Stobbs is the counting book *One, two, three and a million stars*, for which the framework is a day in the life of a little girl and all the things she sees around her. The objects accumulate, so that everything which has already been counted appears again on subsequent pages: on the last double page spread we see one sun, two eyes, three butterflies and so on, right up to "20 dolls and a million stars". The book gently introduces the concept of "the same kind but not necessarily identical": for instance "15 sheep" consist of ten sheep in a pen plus five assorted sheep in the foreground. Counting books can

be tedious for the helping adults - but the objects in this book positively cry out to be counted.

Almost as well known as many a nursery rhyme is *A Dark, Dark Tale*: "Once upon a time there was a dark, dark moor. On the moor there was a dark, dark wood" and so it goes on in an urgent *sonnet* voice right up to a surprise ending. Ruth Brown's illustrations are wonderfully spooky, laden with dust and cobwebs, and the book should go down very well with both older and younger children.

Donald Crews is one of the most exciting of children's book artists, and in *Light* he has produced yet another gem. There is a minimum of words, only labels such as "Lights in the country" or "Headlights/Tail-lights" and the visual impact is allowed to do its own work; I have dredged words could not have evoked the stillness of the night as Crews does in his picture of moonlight.

Building a House has a similar sense of space and unburiedness. We are shown, in bright primary colours and again in only a few words, every stage of building a house, from the arrival of the bulldozers to dig a hole in a green hill to the family moving in. It is a likeable book, chiefly because of the straightforward, unpatronizing approach. *Harry's Stripes* also presents facts in an appetizing form, but here, the approach seems less confident. A little boy and his mother revel in finding stripe patterns all around them, and there is some heavy selling of the idea "learning is fun". "Mummy look! I can even see some striped food", laughs Harry, and "Look, we are sitting on striped seats", laughs Harry. However, the basic idea seems good and there are some nice full page pictures showing various kinds of stripes occurring naturally - zebra skin, a segment of a rainbow, a ploughed field.

It is more than thirty years since *Teddy Bear Coulman* first appeared. It is a book which always felt right - the pictures are stark, yet cosy, and the text is sparse and perfectly balanced. After a gap of thirty years, *Teddy Bear Baker* followed a year or so ago, and now we also have *Teddy Bear Postman*. Both the latter stories seem anaemic compared with the original book. The starkness of the illustrations has been replaced by a more cluttered, conscious nostalgia for the 1940s. But what disappointed me most was the almost identical formula of the three stories. It work-

ed very well indeed once, and it should perhaps have been left at that.

In *Mr Bear Baker* we meet another humanized bear - this time a brown bear rather than a teddy bear - who has already appeared in many amusing books by a gang of very small rabbits. In this book Mr Bear takes over a bakery for a day, and he and the rabbits get carried away and make bread in the shape of bears and rabbits, then cars, crabs and even spectacles. The real baker on his return is furious at first but is soon delighted by his unusual window display.

It always seems curious to me that so few picture books are about children, and *Alfie Gets in First* is in fact the only one in this selection. I have always found Shirley Hughes's books totally irresistible, with her crumpled, lived-in people and relaxed prose. This story is about a little boy who accidentally locks himself into and his mother out of the house. No one panics and naturally the ending is happy. The centre fold of each opening represents the door, so that page and all the goings on outside on the other, as more and more people rally round to see what is going on. Incidentally, the background - a part of a street with a modest row of terraced houses - on closer inspection brims with details, and young readers can follow person, object or animal and their movements over several pages.

Eccentric adults are the main characters in both *Sidney's Friend* and *Bumble's Dream*. *Sidney* is the mild-mannered but determined man who in *Sidney's House* refused to leave his cottage to give way to high-rise flats. In *Sidney's Friend* he makes friends with a deep sea monster who scares the town rigid and is then captured, imprisoned and finally declared non-existent (because nothing remotely like it has ever been seen before), after which *Sidney* smuggles it back whence it came. Mr Bumble in *Bumble's Dream* is a lonely, ridiculed junk collector who uses his rubbish to build himself a beautiful flying machine. The ugly duckling again provides the theme for *Panda and the Odd Lion*. A rather odd shaped lion is rejected by his family, goes off into the world and meets a wide panda (who resolved his own identity crisis in a previous book, *Panda's Puzzle*). The panda makes the lion realize that his humpy back

is really a pair of budding wings, and that to have wings is something special and admirable. The lion eventually returns home, full of confidence, and because he now accepts himself, so does everybody else.

It can be a problem to achieve a good balance between text and illustrations in a picture book, and more so when the text has to be translated or adapted from a foreign language. The Italian *The Paper Aeroplane* which has been "re-told" in English describes making a paper aeroplane and flying off on adventures all round the world. All the adventures in fact take place in the imagination - on the last picture we see that all the exotic ingredients of the adventures are in fact ordinary objects in a room (a globe, a model of a spaceship or pictures on the wall). The illustrations are colourful, exciting and all ready to fire the imagination, but somehow the text never takes off; instead it potters on in a kind of skimpy stream of consciousness.

When it comes to translating verse there are additional problems. A pig that is kind is so awkward to read, aloud or to oneself, that it might have been better to abandon the original verse form altogether. Children's verse does not really work unless it has the unmistakable feel of inevitability. This beginning makes your heart sink: "A glass of milk stands on the table. / Min, though she sees it, isn't able / to tell if there is something in it / that would provide her in a minute / with a small snack."

The German original title, "Ein gutes Schwein bleibt nicht allein" sounds rather neat; then "A pig that is kind won't be left behind", so I suspect something has been lost in the translation. However, the illustrations are lovely, and there is a temptation simply to ignore the text. The best section illustrates the days of a cat's week (Munchday, Sleuthday, Messday and so on), each with a wonderful snapshot of absurd moments in the life of a cat. *The Happy Garden*, with the label "English version by . . .", is also carried by its pictures, which are very luscious. The text is rather dull and general, and somehow it is difficult to get involved in this story about the Garden of Eden.

It is always interesting to see what is new from Anno, and his latest

book, *Anno's Magical ABC*, is most exciting. "An anamorphic alphabet" with letters and pictures deliberately distorted; only when they are read in a curved mirror do they assume their right proportions. Some mirror paper is enclosed in the book and there is a graph for making your own anamorphic drawings. I have never seen a book quite like it, and both adults and children were astounded to see the floppy embryo forms suddenly spring into life.

NICK BUTTERWORTH: *B. B. Blacksheep and Company*. Macdonald. £3.95. 0 356 07547 8.

WILLIAM STOBBS: *This Little Piggy*. Bodley Head. £3.50. 0 370 30424 4.

JOANNA AND WILLIAM STOBBS: *One sun, two eyes, and a million stars*. Oxford University Press. £4.25. 0 19 279747 6.

RUTH BROWN: *A Dark, Dark Tale*. Andersen Press. £3.95. 0 86264 001 6.

DONALD CREWS: *Light*. Bodley Head. £3.95. 0 370 30907 3.

BYRON BARTON: *Building a House*. Julia MacRae. £4.95. 0 86203 051 X.

JILL WATERMAN: *Harry's Stripes*. Burke Books. £3.95. 0 222 00760 5.

PHOEBE AND SELBY WORTHINGTON: *Teddy Bear Postman*. Wame. £2.95. 0 7232 2768 3.

CHIZUKO KURATOMI: *Mr Bear Baker*. Illustrated by Kozo Kakimoto. Macdonald Futura. £3.95. 0 354 08135 7.

SHIRLEY HUGHES: *Alfie Gets in First*. Bodley Head. £3.50. 0 370 30417-9.

PETER VENTURE: *Sidney's Friend*. Granada. £3.95. 0 246 11590 X.

BRUCE TRELOAR: *Bumble's Dream*. Bodley Head. £4.50. 0 370 30424 1.

MICHAEL FOREMAN: *Panda and the Odd Lion*. Hamish Hamilton. £3.95. 0 241 10081 X.

FULVIO TESTA/LUCY MENDHILL: *The Paper Aeroplane*. Faber. £3.95. 0 571 11845 3.

ROBERT GERHARDT: *A Pig that is Kind*. Illustrated by Almut Gernhardt. Jonathan Cape. £4.50. 0 224 01973 2.

SEKIYA MIYOSHI: *The Happy Garden*. Methuen. £3.95. 0 416 24390 8.

MITSUMASA AND MASACHIRO ANNO: *Anno's Magical ABC*. Bodley Head. £3.95. 0 370 30405 5.

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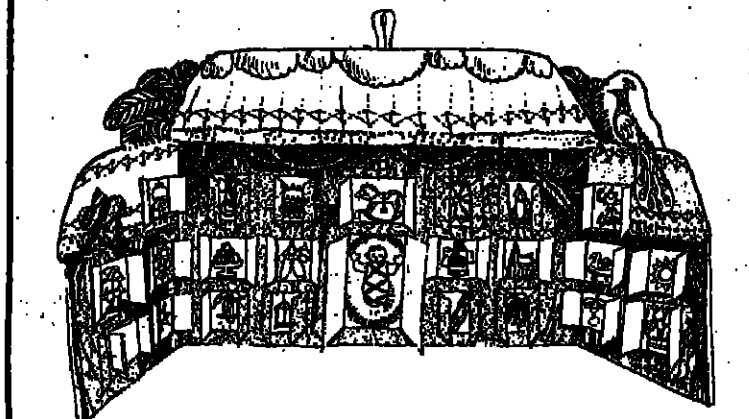
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aloud to the under fives. The pub-

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from that they are hardly a series

The infant reader

By Lucy Micklethwait

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Methuen, £1.50 each.

Compared with the common or garden Ladybird, the board book is uncommonly expensive. Its justification is that it is more or less indestructible and can therefore be enjoyed by young children unsupervised. The board book is only worth the money, therefore, when its content is suited to its purpose - it must not be such that supervision is essential, and it must not be so bland and banal that the child's interest is quickly exhausted.

In the past the pages of board books have oozed with pictures of puppies and pussies and ducklings and dillies. In this more robust age, we see the household items which, because they feature regularly in the lives of babies, are supposed to interest them - milk bottles, nappies, high chairs and potties. In fact children prefer books which have precise, detailed and busy illustrations, and it is a mistake to think that babies, just because they cannot talk, do not have the nous to enjoy such pictures. At a remarkably early age they will learn to point things out in them, and, left to themselves, they will think hard about them, puzzle over them and wonder.

The series of three board books by John Henderson and Glynis Murray are described as "first books for looking, talking and learning". The infant reader is being taught twelve simple words - shoes, socks, mug, spoon, cat, dog, and six more just as thrilling - twelve colours, and the numbers one to twelve. The pictures are necessarily uncomplicated, and the teaching requires supervision, so that the child left on his own will find little to hold his attention. The illustrations are of excellent quality - bright colour photographs with crisp

fresh outlines - but the content is uniformly dull. The fluffy white toy cat in *Picture Book One*, like his black brother in *Colour Book One*, has a gormless cross-eyed expression, and is arguably even less interesting than the stuffed dog and teddy bear which have no expression at all. *Colour Book One* shows a red telephone on a red tablecloth, an exceedingly orange orange, a pair of purple shoes (they are mauve), and so on. *Number Book One* shows one candle, two milk bottles, three plastic ducks, etcetera. The names, colours and numbers (one, two, three as opposed to 1, 2, 3) are written clearly under the relevant photographs. Considering the uninspiring choice of studio props, the photographer has occasionally been imaginative. There is a satisfying picture of six crayons skidding over a piece of graph paper (look, no hands), another of twelve sweets being tossed up into the air, and another of a green spoon about to scoop up some immaculate orange substance (look, no hands again). However, even these supply limited food for thought.

In contrast, Binette Schroeder's Zebby books are illustrated with a mixture of paint, crayon and what appears to be wrapping paper. Zebby is a zebra of the padded pantomime variety. He is covered from head to tail with equally-matched stripes which, regardless of any position he adopts, lie vertical on the page. It is in *Shop Zebby Shop* that he acquires two pairs of boots. Enter Zebby page left. He is offered a dress, then a green cape with floral trimmings, but what he prefers is a man's suit complete with bow-tie and black boots. (One idly wonders whether Zebby, whom I presumed to be male, is in fact female, for the shop assistant - an antelope - is horrified.) Exit Zebby in black boots. In *Zebby Goes Swimming*, Zebby removes his black boots before going for a dip. This is not as prudent as it might seem for over the horizon looms the head of a LION who takes a fancy to the boots and frolics around in them for a bit until he falls over. For *Zebby's Breakfast*, he eats all the flowers on one side of a chasm and then has a precarious journey (in his black boots) across a tree-trunk to the other side. In *Run Zebby Run Run Run* he rushes from page to page (in his black boots) pursued by the aforementioned lion. He stops beside a fence with conveniently matching stripes and disappears. In the last book, *Zebby Goes to the Wind*, he doesn't actually get blown away himself, but his stripes do, and he is left engagingly forlorn-like and miserable (in his black boots). The stripes are restored by the birds and the world smiles again. The sculpted cut-out quality of the art-work here provides little stimulation. Older children will appreciate one or two of the jokes but one must bear in mind that the most successful books for babies can be read inside out, back to front or even upside down.

The River

Vanessa Luff

A new, beautifully detailed picture book by the author/illustrator of *The Cornfield* and *Animals in Winter*. A simple text accompanies the pictures, while more detailed descriptions are given at the back of the book, to help adults discuss the pictures with children.

£3.95

A & C Black



Illustrating atmosphere

By Tanya Harrod

Most fairy tales are a mixture of veiled meaning and straightforward, at times cruel, logic. Their claustrophobic atmosphere is difficult to capture in illustration: perhaps, considering their audience, it is not even desirable to do so. All the same, I could not help feeling dissatisfied with the sumptuous irrelevance of the pictures in some of these books. It was once customary to link a quotation from the text to each illustration. This seems old-fashioned now but it clearly had the advantage of concentrating the artist's mind on a particular passage.

Pauline Ellison's treatment of *Grimm's Fairy Tales* belongs to the popular neo-Flemish school of meticulously observed detail. She creates some striking scenes but few are specific or memorable enough. A pompous introduction by Richard Adams and small print make this a rather unlovely book. The Fairy Tales of Hans Christian Andersen selected and illustrated by Michael Hague are much more attractive. There are a larger number of pictures and they are vividly and simply drawn with a strong historical sense. The illustrations to the Snow Queen are particularly lovely. I suppose that the pictures in a collection of new fairy tales are not of primary importance. Michael Foreman's lurid water-colours for Terry Jones's *Fairy Tales* did not appeal to me but the stories are clear-headed, improving descendants of the genre and manage to be both funny and moralistic.

Sir Gawain and the Green Knight is simply and well retold by Selina Hastings although it notably lacks the zip

and horror of the classic fairy tale. I imagine that younger children might be puzzled by a story which revolves around a young man's chastity whilst older children - not many of them fans of Middle English - might like a little more characterization. Nonetheless this is a very pretty book with decorative arks, parallel worlds, space operas, machine intelligence, alternative histories, or problems with inner space? Or could it be that science fiction is simply a closed book, found wanting without ever being weighed. Science-fictionados have not helped to break down the barriers with their Californian conferences, specialist magazines, bookshops and language. Ultimately their jargon is no more useful or important to the ordinary reader than the bodice-ripper or spy-fi labels. Fortunately young readers are far less prejudiced than their elders, and once introduced to SF, will consume huge quantities. Whether in book or film form, science fiction must now be considered an integral part of our culture.

George Lukas claimed he made the film *Star Wars* for children of ten to a hundred: it should not be forgotten that just as adult writers such as John Wyndham, Ray Bradbury, Arthur C. Clarke and Isaac Asimov appeal to teenagers, so do some of so-called juvenile SF has no upper age limit. Such a book is *Trap for Perseus*, a strong spare fable excellently translated from the German. It opens conventionally with a mission to investigate the loss of two spacecraft. At the exact point of previous communication blackout, the crew of Perseus III realize they have discovered the Argo, a massive two-hundred-year-old world within a spacecraft. As they enter the Argo, the trap is sprung. The story now homes in on the fate of just one man and his re-education on Argo.

Though Blair does not know it, he has become part of a society of 35,000 slaves, 5,000 law enforcers (or Blackshirts), 500 bureaucrats and a supreme council. Political references are never explicit, for this is a book which analyses the nature, not the morality, of totalitarianism. Blair's re-education involves isolation from all except a tutor who sets him a Sisyphean task of immense and useless physical labour until his mind is cleansed of hatred and resentment which give way to resignation and a painful honesty. Once Blair is transferred to work on the collective plantations, the absoluteness of truth is muddled by notions of collective responsibility which incorporate betrayal. Weakened by interrogation, Blair clings to the inadmissible concept of friendship. When his friend is brutally and unnecessarily murdered, he escapes to live in Argo's artificial wilderness. Here he meets another exile, a madman who is the first to answer his questions about Argo, but he too must be killed if Blair is to survive. And so Blair comes full circle, realizing that freedom itself is an illusion, as is the absolute value of any moral law. Naked, but with a

new confidence, he returns to civilization, to find himself not in the radiation hell of his imaginings, but in the relative luxury of the bureaucratic quarters. The final scene of Blair closing the hatchway against the arrival of yet another Perseus mission, questions the whole re-education process.

Pesek's ability to juggle with ideas on a grand scale, and embody them in a highly readable and compulsive story is the essence of good science fiction and typical of the anti-utopian genre of which Orwell and Huxley are distinguished masters. Diana Wynne Jones is less interested in moral philosophy than in the ingenious processes of the human mind. In her rich and inventive novel, *The Homeward Bounders*, she postulates a fantasy War Game that applies to all worlds and times. During his many traverses, thirteen-year-old Jamie encounters such eternal homeward bounders as the Wandering Jew and the Flying Dutchman - he even finds Prometheus, bound not for home but for eternity. His chains are anchored by hope; freedom can only be gained when the anchor crumbles, but he is bound to hope for all time. Tension, paradoxes and word-plays abound. The final solution, following an onslaught on the wargamers by a combination of children and demon-hunters, involves the freeing of Prometheus and Jamie's decision to walk the Bounds for ever. He is the ultimate random factor necessary for the preservation of all other realities - an idea that fits in and out of the mind like the solution to Rubik's cube. Diana Wynne Jones's stamina is extraordinary, for pace and cerebral fertilization are maintained marvelously right to the end of this fascinating novel.

So many adult science fictions depend on one good idea which is essentially static and makes for weak endings. The short story, whose ending is so often its raison d'être, is thus the perfect vehicle for the single brilliant notion. Richard Davis's anthology *Space 7* (seventh in an excellent series of SF) contains a fine balance of the macabre and the mind-stretching. Each tale embodies a highly satisfying concept or conceit, such as the idea of a high technology society so minute that

Grimm's Fairy Tales. Illustrated by Pauline Ellison. Selected and introduced by Richard Adams. 128pp. Routledge & Kegan Paul. £6.95. 0 7100 0912 7

Michael Hague's Favourite Hans Christian Andersen Fairy Tales. 162pp. Methuen Children's Books. £6.95p. 0 416 22080 0

Terry Jones: Fairy Tales. Illustrated by Michael Foreman. 127pp. Pavilion/Michael Joseph. £6.95. 0 907516 03 3

Grimm's Hansel and Gretel. Illustrated by Antonella Bollinger-Savelli. Kaye and Ward. £3.25. 0 7182 1261 4

Hansel and Gretel. Illustrated by Antony Browne. Julia MacRae Books. £4.95. 0 86203 042 0

Chinderella. Illustrated by Moira Kemp. Hamish Hamilton. £3.95. 0 241 10636 2

Sir Gawain and the Green Knight. Words by Selina Hastings. Illustrations by Juan Wijngaard. Methuen/Walker Books. £3.95. 0 416 05860 4

Aladdin and the Wonderful Lamp. Illustrated by Errol Le Cain. Retold by Andrew Lang. Faber and Faber. £4.75. 0 571 11656 6

Aesop's Fables. Illustrated by Heidi Holder. Macmillan. £4.95. 0 333 32202 9

Tales From Aesop. Written and illustrated by Harold Jones. Julia MacRae Books. £5.95. 0 86203 018 8

The mind-stretching and the macabre

By Sarah Hayes

LUDEK PESEK: *Trap for Perseus*. Translated from the German by Anthea Bell. Kestrel. £4.95. 0 7226 5748 XDIANA WYNNE JONES: *The Homeward Bounders*. Macmillan. £4.95. 0 333 3 0970 0RICHARD DAVIS (Editor): *Space 7: Science Fiction Stories*. Hutchinson. £5.50. 0 09 14435 0CHARLES ALVERSON: *Time Bandits*. Based on a screenplay by Michael Palin and Terry Gilliam. Sparrow. 95p. 0 09 926020 4DOUGLAS HILL: *Galactic Warlord*. £3.95. 0 575 02663 4. *Dealing over Veyna*. £3.95. 0 575 02779 7. *Day of the Starwind*. £4.50. 0 575 02917 X. *Planet of the Warlord*. £4.50. 0 575 03009 7. Col-laniz.TERRANCE DICKS: *Doctor Who and an Unearthly Child*. Target paper-backs. £1.25. 0 426 20144 XNICHOLAS FISK: *Robot Revolt*. Pelham. £4.50. 0 7207 1332 3H. M. HOOVER: *Return to Earth*. £4.95. 0 416 20810 X. *The Lost Star*. £4.95. Methuen.BRIAN EARNSHAW: *Dragonfall 5 and the Empty Planet*. RUP. 0 416 84220 8. *Dragonfall 5 and the Space Cowboys*. 60p. 0 416 84250 X. Magnat.JILL PATON WALSH: *The Green Book*. Macmillan. £4.95. 0 333 31910 9PHILIP CURTIS: *Mr Browner and the Comet Crisis*. Andersen Press. £3.95. 0 86264 104 0HUGH WALTERS: *The Dark Triangle*. Faber. £4.95. 0 571 11584 5

its embassy has to be displayed as a pocket-sized kinetic sculpture at the Museum of Modern Art; or the chilling concept of a machine transmitting summer holidays which malfunctions and cause one child to create his own mental holiday, not for ten weeks, but for good. There is a menace behind many of these stories - nuclear threat, ecological disaster or simple human greed - which is characteristic of much (though not all) science fiction.

A curiosity, which both acknowledges and mocks the literary heritage of SF is *Time Bandits* (the book of the film). An anarchic attitude to world history and its tired system of morals embues the time travels of six thieves and one small boy as they plunder their way through Napoleonic Italy, Robin Hood's forest, Agamemnon's Greece, and on into giant territory towards the grotto of Evil. Evil - as prosaic a character as the competent middle-management Supreme Being - plans to rewrite world history on technological lines and is carbonized for his pains.

There is nothing at all prosaic about the evil that haunts the pages of Douglas Hill's fine last *Legionary* quartet of books. The term "space opera" is said to derive from soap opera and thus to be the equivalent of pulp fiction of the mindless, action-packed, violent sort. It is true that Mr Hill eschews philosophy, that his books are eventful and pacy, and do not duck painful deaths and violent encounters. But there the similarity ends: these books are adventure fiction of a very high order indeed. Quite simply (for those who still remember) the best thing since Dan Dare and the Mekon. Like Larry Niven (another despised but inventive operator) Mr Hill elevates the label space opera to describe a fast-moving, utterly compelling large-scale work with a cast of billions.

His wide screen embraces the inhabited worlds, planets and moons that have been settled by humans following "the Scattering". The harsh planet of Moros has evolved a race of fighting men and women known as the Legions, whose inherited physical skills, trained discipline and superior weaponry become legendary. A mysterious nuclear device destroys

Moros and infects all who come within her orbit, all that is except Keill Randor. In their hidden asteroid, the Overseers (a galactic watchdog committee) replace Randor's radiation-infected skeleton with an unbreakable organic alloy. Together with Gif, a gentle balllike telepathic alien of infinite superiority, the last Legionary sets forth to avenge the destruction of his people and find the source of evil code-named Warlord who operates through the agents of the "Deathwing" commanded by a being known only as "The One".

Each book works up to a terrifying crescendo with brilliantly orchestrated fights - Mr Hill describes physical actions and events with cinematic clarity. Tension mounts across the span of the quartet as Keill kicks, chops and flukes his way through mutants with living armour, controlled killer robots, mind-reading albinos, nerve jangler guns, radiation bombs, murderous starwinds, legionary clones and finally to The One - a golden giant with mutant human head and brain and mechanical body. The last book, *Planet of the Warlord*, leaves the reader gasping with suspense as Keill is brainwiped by the Warlord who turns out to be a superbrain derived from the combined mental energy of twenty-four living beings who speak as one in twenty-four different voices. Not for the squeamish, but a stunningly good read.

The only series more popular with young readers than Douglas Hill's is *Doctor Who* - a positive industry with a book appearing every month to keep up with the 116 separate stories that have been televised during the past eighteen years. The very first story - *Doctor Who and an Unearthly Child* - has just been published for the first time, and reveals a much sharper and more equivocal doctor than the genial eccentric of later years. According to one librarian, *Doctor Who* is not considered by children to be proper science fiction at all - although he time travels, visits other planets, meets intelligent machines and BEMs (often gigantic ones), and does all the usual SF things. He and his monsters have somehow become a cosy, familiar and inescapable part of our cultural

landscape. Even the evil Daleks, intelligent beings embodied in machinery, have a chubby conical shape, a silly walk (or glide) and a splendidly predictable method of extermination. It is the thrill of a known fear that doesn't linger in the mind that engenders the best of *Doctor Who*, on and off the screen.

The mechanical menace - the possibility of society being taken over by machines - is a familiar SF theme, but the versatile Nicholas Fisk gives it a new turn in his thought-provoking novel, *Robot Revolt*. Like many juvenile SF writers, Mr Fisk does not share adult Sci-Fi's inability to handle character: his futuristic gospel sect, with its blinkered chapel burnets and hellfire preacher, are fine fully realized creations. Hez and Abi, offspring of the Pastor of the Shining Light Bedrock Gospellers, have the irreverence of all vicar's children, and their quotation of biblical tags at unsuitable moments is a delight. Their world is not a happy one, though, for their father is a fanatic, gradually starving his weak wife to death, having allowed three of his children to die in infancy on account of his principles. The appearance of Max, a sophisticated Robomart Mark III programmed with a complex ethical code, seems to be the solution to the children's problems. His moral consciousness can be subverted to despise Father. While Max perceives the need to be rid of the Pastor, it is not for the children's sake - all his free time has been spent at the cassette library absorbing revolutionary literature by the caseful. The Pastor outmanoeuvres Max by poking fun at his robots' revolutionary rally, so Max destroys the Pastor's credibility by revealing his criminal neglect of his wife and children. The Robot Revolt, too, is doomed to ignominy, for the boss of Robomart, the enigmatic, anagrammatic Mr Toroha has been watching over Max right from the start.

In *Robot Revolt* the propaganda of religion and revolution are equated, while in H. M. Hoover's *Return to Earth* it is industrial power that is compared with religion. A retiring planetary governor comes home to find his country efficiently run by a giant industrial conglomerate, but his people under the sway of the Dolmen's Nest Egg cult, which uses drugs and extravagant rituals to part people from their money. The governor and the young heiress to the conglomerate are dumped in the desert as the Dolmen plans a takeover. Rescued by a primitive people who desire no taint of civilization and can't wait to get rid of their unwanted guests, the two return to break the Dolmen's power and breathe a new more compassionate life into the workings of the conglomerate. Although resolutely sticking to the anonymity of initials, H. M. Hoover

Picture Books

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A powerful picture of adolescent feelings in which Tom and Cass, who are twins, discover that their innocent childhood together has turned into a dark and sinister relationship. £4.95

The Golden Goose

IVAN SOUTHALL

In this gripping sequel to *King of the Sticks*, young Cusker, who is a dyer, is forced to follow the wild and roving preacher Tom in search for gold. Told by a master storyteller, this mind-stretching tale is complete with action-packed drama and larger than life characters. £5.50

Methuen Children's Books

er's writing reveals her to be a woman. To be shamelessly sexist, the refreshing presence of female protagonists, the gentler (almost soft-centred) approach, and the interest in moods and feelings add a new dimension to the later edge of male orientated SF. Ms Hoover's *Lost Star* describes the birth of a potato-shaped alien race brought about by the empathy of a lone teenage girl. The gradual restoration to power of the ultrasensitive computer that controls the aliens' intelligence is beautifully conceived, as are incidental details such as the crablike precision-engineering aliens. The novel is marred, however, by the faintest whiff of sentimentality.

Science Fiction is a great breeder of genres, and it's always pleasing to see the mode overtaken. One writer who has always quietly been a law unto himself is Brian Earnshaw whose decrepit spaceship *Dragonfall 5* has delighted younger children for years. *Dragonfall 5* and the *Space Cowboys* and *Dragonfall 5* and the *Empty Planet* are cheerful, easy to read and full of jokes and pleasing inventions such as algae which mutates into blue-grass space pastures, or the self-explanatory painful scissor plant, or musical stones that sing every thousand years to prevent boredom setting in. The family that inhabits *Dragonfall 5* has a happy-go-lucky attitude that asks little of life or reader.

Jill Paton Walsh is a distinguished writer who aims at the same age group, but asks much more of her readers. *The Green Book* is a sombre tale of the difficulties of colonizing a new planet. The adults wrangle, make wrong decisions, and worry while the children explore. Shine, their beautiful new home, to discover food sources and make friends with the inhabitants, giant but short-lived moths who dance and die. The colonists, too, are doomed because the corn they brought with them has grown up crystalline. Again the children show the way by making and

eating bread from the glassy hexagonal corn. They survive, and young Pattie tells their story, writing it in the empty green book which, much to everyone's annoyance, she chose to bring on the voyage out. It is a pity the publishers hadn't the imagination to bind and jacket this book in green - it wouldn't have spoilt the surprise.

The Green Book's pervasive and ultimately irritating melancholy is matched by the schoolboy heartiness of *Mr Browner and the Comet Crisis*, a misguided attempt to tie up the school story and the alien takeover. The opening is splendidly downbeat, however, with aliens in the shape of three very, very ordinary humans emerging from the sea (having been dropped off Halley's Comet) to seek anonymity before they take over the world. The alien boy's downfall is his uncanny expertise at marbles, which gives the game away as the story degenerates into farce.

Finally to *The Dark Triangle*, a novel by the faithful Hugh Walters, whose SF portmanteaus follow a familiar pattern of high-level extra-terrestrial derring do. In this one the PM and the President are kidnapped in the Bermuda Triangle, and whisked off to the planet Sembra by dolphin-like beings. The United Nations Explorations Agency sends its special deputies, Chris Godfrey, and his trio of friends to investigate. Not only do they bring back the bigwigs, but they have also been given the key to harnessing solar energy. The world can breathe again. *The Dark Triangle* doesn't exercise brain or imagination, but Hugh Walters is much loved by children and read perhaps by less able teenagers. The continued success of so undistinguished a writer is a comforting reminder that enduring forms of literature attract practitioners at all levels of appeal and ability.

Readers who remain unconvinced should remember Kurt Vonnegut's creation, the outrageous pulp SF writer Kilgore Trout, whose plots had the uncanny habit of coming true.

Building new worlds

By Holly Eley

VIRGINIA HAMILTON:

The Gathering
Julia MacRae. £5.25.
0 86203 0374

The Gathering, volume three of Virginia Hamilton's alluring but incohesive trilogy, is an innovative book; likely to engender a spate of analysis from Black Studies Departments, it is difficult to understand and not easy to read. Children who have read *Justice* and *Her Brothers* in which the twins, Thomas and Levi Douglas, their sister Justice and their friend Dorian Jefferson behave (most of the time) like ordinary, tough twelve or thirteen-year-olds with a Tom Sawyerish sense of humour, then *Dustland* in which their extra-sensory powers propel them into a gloomy world inhabited by humanoid and mythical creatures, will be undisturbed by a purely introductory to extra-terrestrial activity.

The unit was power. It had the force of four who were time-travellers. Now it was between its present and that future it knew as *Dustland*. It was in the *Crossover* between times. The *Crossover* echoed with sighs and whispers of mind-travellers trapped in it for eternity. Those travellers had failed to hold their concentration while mind-jumping from one time to another. They were trapped forever in the nowhere between times - unless, as swarming multi-beings, they grew powerful enough to fly their way out. They attempted to capture new time-travellers, such as the unit on its way to *Dustland*.

Justice, Thomas, Levi and Dorian (transformed in a time warp into

"the unit") have returned to *Dustland* (a country akin to the dust storm-plagued mid-west prairies of the 1930s) in order to guide the decrepit three-legged Slaker mutants to freedom. But once there, they encounter, empathize with and decide to help the half-child legless, smooth keeps and youngens who, grouped in "puckers" of threes, are inching their way towards a Celestial City in the face of threats from other species of marauding mutants and the omnipotent Mal. They join forces and the vicissitudes of their progress to what proves to be a dystopian illusion provide straightforward adventure and the most intelligible section of *The Gathering*.

H. G. Wells, Orwell's and Aldous Huxley's accounts of the hazards of a future in which man's obsession with scientific advancement has superseded his concern for humanity are all more accessible than *The Gathering*. But Virginia Hamilton's *Colossus*, the crippled computer which controls Domity with its smooth-running transport system, clement climate and tranquil, because drugged, inhabitants is not complacent. Its robotic interpreter, Celester remembers the satisfactions of self-determination and the *Colossus* continues to hope that it may regain control with the few starters (or superior twentieth-century humans) who escaped to another planet after their relentless and mad technology and nuclear power had destroyed the world and reduced the less gifted survivors to wanderers in *Dustland*.

Hope that the reconstruction of a free world may be possible is indi-

cated by Justice's willingness to give her particularly sensitive psychic power to the *Colossus*, even though in so doing she may be narrowed forever in the *Crossover*. With her power the *Colossus* may be able to contact the Starters and together they will rebuild a humanitarian, if imperfect, planet. More interestingly, the youthful packens, who have never wholly lost their independence, decide to return to and make the best of purgatorial *Dustland*.

Her depiction of the aftermath of holocaust is, once one has worked out how to follow the narrative, predictable; though the possibility of an optimistic solution, however distant and for however few, is refreshing. Oblique allusion to black folklore, traditional American children's books such as Frank Baum's *Wizard of Oz*, comics and junior science fiction annuals will not be easily followed by British children and one is often tempted to treat *The Gathering* as a treasure hunt. The arbitrary use of lower case personal pronouns and dated hip-phrasology ("Be tight, you... be tight me") are irritating red herrings rather than welcome clues.

But it is not easy to deal with the complicated genre of science-fictional allegory for children while at the same time encouraging black confidence. Among Virginia Hamilton's more inventive devices are the children's abolitionist and humanist names of Douglas and Jefferson - a clear encouragement to young blacks, though also possibly a warning against losing touch with their roots and becoming the strongest of Starters.

Paperbacks in brief

Alice and Martin Provensen: *The Mother Goose Book* (Beaver Books. £1.95. 0 600 20478 2). 1980. A collection of familiar rhymes, songs and sayings laid out in double-page spreads with tiny pictures and decorations. Ages under 5.

Mary Dickinson: *Alex's Bed*. Illustrated by Charlotte Firmin. (Hippo. 90p. 0 590 70071 5). 1980. Alex's room is "just like a dump" so his Mum builds a bed on tall legs to give him more room. A ladder, a safety rail and a hanging table take care of some problems but Alex's untidiness cannot be solved. Ages 5 to 7.

Colette O'Hare: *Seven Years and a Day*. Illustrated by Beryl Cook. (Fontana. £1.25. 0 00 661899 5). 1981. The Mulholland's six-toed magic cat has everything arranged to his satisfaction and can even remove the human who seems to stand between him and an even easier life. Beryl Cook's sophisticated naïve pictures complement the operation of domestic magic. Ages 5 to 7.

Hans Christian Andersen: *The Snow Queen*. Illustrated by Errol Le Cain. (Puffin. 95p. 0 14 030294 7). Original. A new version by Naomi Lewis of the story of Gerda's journey through the winter lands in search of Kay whose heart has been pierced by a splinter of ice. Ages 5 to 7.

Margaret Mahy: *The Great Piratical Rumbustication and The Librarian and the Robbers*. Illustrated by Quentin Blake. (Puffin. 90p. 0 14 031261 7). 1978. Two funny stories. The pirates hold a party at the Terrapin new house and Mr Terrapin discovers a more relaxed attitude to life. A band of robbers kidnap a librarian who teaches them to become "more cultured and philosophical" by reading their stories. Ages 5 to 7.

Julia Watson: *The Puffin Book of Funny Verse*. (Puffin. 85p. 0 14 031333 8). A varied collection of humorous poems for children which range from the works of Lear, Belloc and Ogden Nash to those of Ted Hughes, Charles Causley and Spike Milligan. Ages 5 to 7.

Raymond Briggs: *Gentleman Jim* (Hamish Hamilton. £1.95. 0 241

10698 2). The day dreams of a Birmingham lavatory attendant and the penalty for trying to make them come true related in Briggs's familiar comic-strip style with bubbles. Ages 7 to 11.

Diann Wynne Jones: *The Four Granities* (Beaver 75p. 0 600 204065 5). 1980. Eric and Emily's four grandmothers come to look after them while their parents are away. Their task is not made easier by Eric's magic inventions. Ages 7 to 11.

Tessa Kraling: *Washington and the Marrow Raiders* (Hippo. 80p. 0 590 70092 8). Original. Susan Ramage's grandfather finds a footprint in his marrow bed but with the help of Aunt Barbara a celebrated inventor and a life-like model of a real boy called Washington, the marrow thieves are thwarted. Ages 7 to 11.

Ian Woodward: *An A-Z of Monsters* (Beaver. 95p. 0 600 20325 5). Original. A catalogue of monsters from the Abominable Snowman to Zu the Dragon which provides the reader with most the known facts. Ages 7 to 11.

Mary Stewart: *A Walk in Wolf Wood* (Knight. 95p. 0 340 36537 X). 1979. John and Margaret slip back in time to medieval Germany and a world of spells and enchantments. They break the magic which has turned Mardian into a wolf and restore happiness to the kingdom and to Duke Otho and his son. Ages 11 to 13.

Nina Bayden: *The Robbers* (Puffin. 95p. 0 14 031317 6). 1979. Philip Holbein has to leave his grandmother and her grace and favour castle for a new life in London with his father and stepmother. There he encounters a different way of life and meets Dacy who lives across the canal and who leads him in to danger and a moral dilemma. Ages 11 and over.

K. M. Peyton: *A Midsummer Night's Death*. (Puffin. £1. 014 031355 9). 1978. The death of the ineffective English master at the progressive school Meddington. Involves Jonathan Meredith in a conflict of loyalties, and considerable danger. Ages 11 and over.

Lure of flying

By Arthur Marshall

J. M. BARRIE:

Peter Pan
Illustrated by Trina Schart Hymen
Hodder and Stoughton. £7.95.
0 340 26430 6

Many good stories which have begun their lives as books have wound up, dramatized, as plays or films. Indeed, very few famous novels have escaped what has, on the whole, been not too bad a fate. The reverse process is more of a rarity and one wonders what led Barrie in 1911 to reproduce in fiction form the play of *Peter Pan*, which first triumphantly saw the light seven years earlier in 1904. It can hardly have been inspired by financial necessity (the little genius left - and this in the 1930s - nearly a quarter of a million). Letters from children, perhaps, longing to hear more? A request from parents for suitable bedtime reading aloud (increasingly, alas, a thing of the past)? Obsession with his subject?

"The gallery boys won't stand it." We owe to Barrie himself this harsh and inaccurate opinion expressed by a gloomy stage-hand before the first performance. And now, nearly eighty years later and with modern audiences much less naïve and altogether tougher, how does the

play fare? The cheering answer is, as well as ever. The actors still have to shout their lines through the children's excited chatter ("Why is Tiger Lily looking so cross?"). And although no actress in the title role can ever make one forget Jean Forbes-Robertson, who played it for nine seasons, *Peter Pan* has an indelible magic in the theatre. A child's fascination with pirates, mermaids, flying, dogs as nannies, underground homes and redskins on the prow isn't going to vanish overnight.

I rather suspect, however, that the average age of a contented youthful audience is now fairly low. During the last century, juvenile maturity seems to have advanced itself by about two years. At what age do children, boys anyway, now start scoffing at the mere idea of fairies and Neverlands? Eight? Six? Four? and with poor old Santa going phut at about the same age.

Barrie was no fool and was well aware that appeals to the members of an audience not to let the fairy Tinker Bell die would not always meet with a unanimously favourable response ("Many clapped. Some didn't. A few little beasts hissed"). But in general who could resist a crocodile with one of Captain Hook's arms and an alarm clock in its inside, a kite which rescued a stranded Wendy from the lagoon, and, above all, a happy ending for all concerned in the snug and womb-

like warmth of a Bloomsbury night nursery.

The appeal of the play is constant but about the book one is not so sure. In it, Barrie followed the play very closely and what emerges is the stage dialogue with the copious stage directions (usually, with this author, as long as the spoken words) let into the text. And Barrie's stage directions, coy, arch, roguish, whimsical and pretty frightful, have been objects of derision for some time. Undergraduate play-reading societies, seeking a light-hearted and ribald end-of-term treat, have been known to read out *Peter Pan*, in toto and to ear-splitting shrieks.

For with the visual and dramatic impact absent, what are we to make of the *Lost Boys*' favourite drink ("calabashes of pee-pee"), of the Indian braves' warlike cries of "Scalp un, oh, velly quick" followed by "Ugh, ugh, wah", of mermaids "going plop-plop", of lark Wendy "playing rum-tum" on the sleeping John and announcing that she would like to "squake" Peter? There is a wince whichever way you look.

And yet, so strong is the story that a mother with a sense of the theatre and the ability to vet the text and remove doubtful material, might still manage to grip a child audience safely tucked up in bed and with the nightlights lit (they're going to need them for the pirate passages). It is certainly worth a try and the latest edition, attractively illustrated, is to be recommended.

Yesterday's lessons

By Ruth Harris

OWLADYS AND BRIAN REES-

WILLIAMS:
What I Cannot Tell My Mother
Oxford University Press. £7.95.
0 19 21 2223 1

What I cannot tell my mother is not fit for me to know - an admirable sentiment in the nursery but a clumsy title for a book, clumsy and also misleading because Kate goes straight to her mother and continues to believe in the gooseberry bush. The secret that the other children were whispering about is never learnt and the reader perhaps has the right to feel cheated.

Victorian pictures are now being bought not always for their quality but because the spiral of taste has now come round, prices are rising and the period has become fashionable. This miscellany refers to such a climate of opinion. Text and illustrations come from the Rees-Williams's books and the books themselves must be fascinating but why was this particular selection made and for whom is it intended? Not for the historian or scholar and yet merit is not the criterion. A selection from our Ladybird reading-books, might be interesting if published in a hundred years time but time wouldn't make them into literature and we don't even find here the drama of "ten men met in a den" which makes

"Reading without Tears" so memorable. How then do the compilers intend us to react? There is no introduction but the advertisement talks about "a humorous slant" and the slant somehow is a little awkward. "The Band of Hope Boy's Recliner" may strike a comic note but drink was a menace to the family rather than a personal problem in the days when children lying in bed were woken up by the noise that drunks made when the pubs were closing. To be simply outmoded isn't to be funny.

Of course it's illuminating to go back to a different way of thinking and to work out the differences between yesterday and today. Every picture told a story and every story points a moral. Bruce learnt his lesson from a spider and Tom learns to persevere from watching a snail climbing a wall. Slow Tom gets a prize at last and this is as it should be but are we meant to clap or to smile? The Victorians were more at home with death than we are: "Noises which would not frighten you frighten baby. Many a sick child has been killed in this way." The book is divided into sections: a poem for each day of the week, and each day begins and ends with a prayer or hymn. This perhaps is the essential difference in teaching. Children used to go to Sunday School whereas now they are taught comparative religion. Some of these prayers are lovely: "I will not fear/For God is near/Through the dark night/as in the light/And while I sleep/Safe watch will keep/Why

should I fear/When God is near?" a rune to comfort any child when the only light is on the landing, but some of them are doggerel and again we don't quite know where we are. It is this variation in quality and subject that makes the collection such a brain-tub. We turn from learning how to light a fire at the top, so that the smoke will have to pass through the fire and be consumed, to a jingle about naughty Johnny and the measles and dates vary over a period of more than sixty years. Even the illustrations, delightful as they are, seem to be chosen at random and some of them are taken from works published in this century. Only the black and white half-title pictures are identified and it would have been kind to give page references.

Mrs Gatty, Miss Yonge and Mrs Molesworth were writing in the period covered by this book and were exploring the continent of childhood but these excerpts are taken from ordinary schoolbooks and everything here is seen from the teacher's point of view. One waits in vain, for the poetic moment, for the page to come alive. The teachers are in charge and they know that they are right. We may feel nostalgia for the safe world of Ranelagh nightgowns airing on the nursery fender but don't forget the dark corner on the stairs and the impossibility of making the grown-ups understand. Because they lived a hundred years ago and were made to say their prayers it doesn't mean that children then were different. It was only the rules and this book, unimportant as it is, may help you remember what they were.

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The Little Moon Theatre

IRENE HAAS

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RUBY ROSA GUY

From the author of *Edith Jackson* - a "reverberating book... it makes other teenage stuff of the same kind look very small indeed." - Naomi Lewis, *The Listener*. £5.50



Andrew Hishop

Piloting spaceship earth

By F. W. Kellaway

ADAM FORD:
Weather Watch
0 416 05670 9
JOHN SATCHEL:
Energy at Work
0 416 05660 1
DAVID LAMBERT:
The Active Earth
0 416 05650 4
Methuen, £3.95 each.

There is a sensible common pattern for these three books, with words and pictures woven to give clear, if necessarily attenuated, explanations of scientific phenomena. Development of each subject leads to a final section on the future, where reasonable indicators show possibilities likely to be realized in the lifetime of young readers.

Perhaps the most effective of the trio is the introduction to meteorology, and this is because the topic can be more readily related to personal experience than can, say, volcanoes or nuclear power stations. Weather reports seen on the television screen have brought familiarity with the standard phrases and the principles of forecasting.

Adam Ford adds the background. He shows how winds are caused,

distinguishes between them in terms of direction, content, temperature and strength, and explains about thermometers and barometers. He interprets also the creation and effect of the more powerful winds. In an account of the relationship between cyclones and hurricanes, he writes that "the worst hurricane is from the name of a West Indian storm god. In the Pacific Ocean, these storms are called typhoons, and in Australia they are known as willy-willies." Incidentally, some authorities restrict the use of typhoon to the China Seas, presumably because of the commonly assumed derivation from the Chinese dialect, *ui-fong*, for great wind. Snow and hail, dew and rainbows, man's ability to change the weather and to create microclimates, and advice on building one's own rain gauge, are other features of an intriguing text.

Practical experimentation is also encouraged in the volume on energy. Games are devised to engender a recognition of the need to conserve energy. There are instructions on making a simple anemometer and a device for converting potential to kinetic energy, while other exercises are concerned with the efficiency of machines. All this is associated with careful expositions on sources of power, the sun heading a list which includes wind and waves, water and plants, fossil fuels and, of course, the nuclear process. The whole is up-to-date enough to include the feasibility of geothermal and tidal power, and

realistic enough to show the dangers of radioactivity and of excessive waste of energy. There may be some puzzlement in a picture of a heat-sensitive film, but generally the illustrations help to convey the message.

The many coloured drawings in *The Active Earth* are especially effective. End plates showing earth's time-scale from 4,000 million years ago to 40 million years ahead should give a sense of perspective. The merging or splitting of continents, the differing ratios of land and water, and all of nature's massive geological and climatic transformations, are elucidated in this overview of an ever-changing globe.

The three books are complementary with, indeed, some overlapping of topics. They explain appropriately for young readers something about the world in which they live. So much high technology is taken for granted that it is salutary to be confronted with the hazards and consequences of oil supplies running out or a new ice age or a nuclear disaster. Equally, there are commonsense pointers to the good life that could be more universally available if man used his new found knowledge wisely. Pollution and destruction could be replaced by conservation and a richer well-being for more people. The basic knowledge in this series could lead to subsequent deeper reading and understanding.

Political fables

By Kamini Knill

CHAZ DAVIES, RUHI HAMID and CHRIS SEARLE (Editors):
Tales of Mozambique
Young World Books, £2.
0 905405 04 8

"And this is the reason why the pig has a squashed nose and never wants to fly any more..." If you want to know more about the Icarus-like fate of a pig who tried to compete with a kite, why cats and dogs are traditional enemies, why the lion roars and crocodiles are aggressive, or read an alternative to Kipling's account of how the leopard got his spots, then *Tales of Mozambique*, a collection of fables from the African oral tradition, will provide some intriguing answers.

This book comes from a new publishing house, "Young World Books", which intends to specialize in Third World children's fiction, with the aim of eliminating prejudice and introducing young people to a variety of unfamiliar cultures. The collection was first published in 1977 in Portuguese by FRELIMO, the People's Government in Mozambique. Not surprisingly, therefore, political allegory underlies several of the tales. "Senhor Boko, the Hippopotamus" is an allegory of the Mozambican revolution and the unstable world of the now disbanded dynasties groups (forums for, among other things, accusation of disloyalty). "Senhor Boko" is reluctant to join the struggle against the Mavindjis (jackals); he is too comfortable leading a "fat life". However, when the jackals have been overthrown and freedom won, he recognizes the advantages of exploiting the new collective farm life. He attempts to increase his own standing by maliciously denouncing an innocent lizard for laziness and reluctance to participate in the new life. "Senhor Boko's" disloyalty is eventually recognized when he flees with much of the animals' harvest.

Those tales which most obviously attempt to propagate political ideas are the least successful. "The Well in the Forest", in which the lazy rabbit tries to take advantage of the hard-working monkey, is weakened by the

addition of a final paragraph explicitly relating the story to the evils of colonialism. Generally, however, political comment and allusion are more subtle and in most cases the young reader would remain unsuspecting - whether one considers this an advantage or not.

As in most folk tales and fables, justice and morality are recurring themes which are emphasized by a rigidly defined animal world, a microcosm of the human world, where good is rewarded and evil harshly punished. Only intelligence and cunning escape censure: for example, Simba the Wildcat (who is vividly presented in an accompanying cartoon-strip) and the rabbit emerge as heroes who overcome the traditional kings of the jungle - lions, elephants and hippopotamuses - by virtue of their superior wits. A little disconcerting, perhaps, for parents attempting to create a moral sense in their children.

Part of the appeal of the tales lies in the names used which surely capture a child's imagination - helpful translations of these appear after each tale. We are introduced to the Gala-Gala (small lizard), piri-piri pepper and juga beans, Guazi the water bird and Sungura the rabbit, the evil quinzumbas (hyenas) and the ruler Queen Fissi; though a few especially colourful ones may prove stumbling blocks for pronunciation, such as the children's names Mura-nangungauya and Chivangavanga.

Like all folk tales, these tales can be read by all ages; however, the consistent political slant often brings with it a number of terms and expressions unfamiliar to children and some which are probably intelligible only to those acquainted with the recent history of Mozambique. The undeniable charm of many of the illustrations and some of the tales themselves becomes distorted. Yet, for these very reasons, the collection provides a greater insight into the culture and development of their country of origin than do collections from other countries.

Tales of Mozambique appears as a large, glossy paperback generously filled with black and white illustrations. These are by eighteen artists from all parts of the world and range widely in style and medium - ink drawing, pen and wash, woodcut.

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commentary

The most poetical of painters

By Richard Wollheim

Poussin: *Sacraments and Bacchanals*
National Gallery of Scotland

The National Gallery of Scotland's Poussin exhibition is perfect in size. It consists of thirty-three paintings, twenty-seven drawings, an engraving after a work destroyed, and a model of the kind of model Poussin is known to have used to organize complex compositions. Of the paintings, one preserves a design by Poussin but does not pretend to be by him; a second does, but unperceptibly; of a third it would be nice to think that it was by him; a fourth, the Montpellier "Venus and Adonis", is a work of great intensity and eroticism, whoever it is by. The remaining pictures record with exemplary precision the development of an artist of genius throughout the first half of his career and somewhat over the threshold into the second half. The drawings are largely complementary to the paintings, and the greater number relate to the three series which are the glory of the exhibition: the *Bacchanals*, and the two sets of *Sacraments*, hung together for the first time.

I cannot believe that at this moment there is anywhere in the world a single room - Islamic tiles, north Italian frescoes, plain white walls, whatever - which I at any rate, and I cannot be alone, would find more beautiful.

Nicolas Poussin arrived in Rome from Paris via Venice in early 1624. He worked there until 1640, when he was invited by the French king Louis XIII to return to France. In Paris he found himself committed to large-scale decorative projects which were quite unattractive to his nature, and involved in petty intrigue, and in 1642 he found excuse to return to Rome, where he was able to return to his true nature, that of a painter, and to his true patrons, who remained with him for the rest of his life. He died in Rome, a very private individual, until he died in 1665. The visit to Paris serves to divide the two halves of his artistic career, and the last painting in this exhibition, which is the last of the second set of *Sacraments*, commissioned by one of the new French patrons, accordingly dates from 1648.

The most succinct way of characterizing the first half of Poussin's career - which began only in 1627 when he was already thirty-three - is a progression from the values of *clarity* to those of *disegno*. *Clarity* in this context means richness and density of colour, the interplay of light and shade, the muffling of form, broad execution, and a tendency to strong recessionary composition - in effect, the baroque; *disegno* means clarity of form, sharp outlines, observance of local colour, clarity or smoothness of handling, a planar or organizational of the picture - in effect, classicism; and a spirit of characterizing Poussin's development in this way is that it touches the very terms in which a great painter of his time and place could have viewed his activity. The total work in this development is the Dulwich "Triumph of David" of 1633, a work of grandeur and deviousness, and of the pictures that immediately lead up to it and indicate a dissatisfaction with the baroque, a special delight of the present exhibition is the freshly cleaned Fra Bartolomeo's "St. Peter's Prisoner", a picture of the same subject, but so different in effect, and so different in the first instance because Poussin perceived this. Denis Mahon has got us to see a group of paintings, done in the years 1636-8, which he labelled "pseudo-baroque", as a direct answer on Poussin's part to the public debates which had taken place in the Accademia di San Luca between the partisans of *clarity* and those of *disegno*, in which the former had explicitly conceded the superiority of the latter. In a stylistic sense, it also flags in a stylistic sense. With the bunches into

which he groups his figures Poussin places himself by the side of Raphael; with his use of cropping, and the startling immediacy it gives to the action, he is the companion of Degas.

If there is a simple progression to which Poussin's early development conforms, there is nothing simple about its realization.

While he was in the camp of *Clarity* Poussin admired Titian but a great deal separates the two men. Ruskin, who tried hard (as he often did with great artists) not to admire

himself of content. In these pictures, represented in the present exhibition by the Elsmere "Moses Striking the Rock", Poussin set out to demonstrate how subjects that involved many characters in different moods and emotions could be realized with order and recourse to the favoured operations of baroque composition. In remaining within classicism, however, he radically reinterpreted it: he had no desire to go back, but even to stand still he had to invent. This particular phase is no more than the transient explicitness of one of Poussin's lasting concerns, for which over

visual fact that we have still to make sense of: Armida wears a mask-like visage, Rinaldo is enveloped in a kind of subaqueous sensuousness. It looks as though the very eroticism that reason tries to repel has returned to colour it, and that it is only under this colouring that it can finally vanquish concupiscence. In other words, having allegorized the victory of Rinaldo over Armida, Poussin would appear to take literally the fact that Rinaldo gains it through his beauty. Or consider the highly poetic National Gallery "Cephalus and Aurora", where a related drama, in which again duty defeats desire but only through an alliance with desire, is enacted. If Poussin is the painter of repression, he is also and visibly the painter of the return of the repressed, and it is just this dual sympathy that accounts for the depth and pathos of his work and makes him, in Hazlitt's words, "of all painters, the most poetical".

There is, however, no one single way in which Poussin allowed desire its second chance. In the "Bacchanals" executed for Cardinal Richelieu, where eroticism is celebrated directly, the result is emotionally least poignant. "The Triumph of Pan" is a heady work, particularly in its depiction of nature, and this exhibition provides a splendid occasion to see it cleaned, but the "Bacchanals", ultimately, are public paintings, and one effect of seeing the series is to become aware of the perils to which Poussin would have been exposed, had he returned permanently to France.

"Triumph of Neptune", deliberately reminiscent of antique painting, there is a more roundabout disclosure of desire. It consists in a particular use of the background that is to become a poignant feature of Poussin's later work: as though behind the picture that is before us, beyond the scene that it represents, there is another picture, a further world, of effortless beauty. Desire is modified or softened into yearning. A cliff in sunlight, a grove of palm trees, a temple facade, often reflected in water, are used to express the sensuous, but as something put to one side or placed out of immediate reach. Poussin's backgrounds become like thoughts that rest at the back of the mind: tantalizing but not importunate.

In the second set of *Sacraments* Poussin gets beyond even this point; it seems as though sensuousness and eroticism no longer require any kind of segregation; they seep back right into the main body of the picture, where they remain subordinate to the overpowering gravity with which the paintings are imbued. Details of brass ornament, food, drapery, architecture, flowers are at once solemn and sexual. Anyone who has peered through the left or the central aperture at the back of the "Marriage" will have caught sight of one of the most remarkable and moving representations of human happiness: sunlight and carved stone, mysterious, momentary, with a fierce sense of place, to be seen only over someone's shoulder.

Chantelou, for whom this second set of *Sacraments* was painted, had curtains made for them and drew back only one at a time. Bernini approved of the arrangement. Poussin is best not seen to excess. If he is seen too often, his work seems to be a prisoner awaiting execution. This book, published 1500 years after his birth, is the first major study in English for forty years of a writer who was of critical importance in the history of thought. £18

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Henry Chadwick

The Consolation of Philosophy by Boethius ranks among the most remarkable books to be written by a prisoner awaiting execution. This book, published 1500 years after his birth, is the first major study in English for forty years of a writer who was of critical importance in the history of thought. £18

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commentary

A cisalpine romance

By Peter Conrad

La Sonnambula
Covent Garden

Though Bellini's operas now have a reputation for melodious fatuity, they make more sense dramatically than they're given credit for. Auden didn't help by making them a campy acme of good taste, declaring that "no gentleman dislikes Bellini": the joke lay in the prissy absurdity of the advocacy. Covent Garden has revived *La Sonnambula* after the lapse of a decade, and in order to accommodate a favourite singer, Ileana Cotrubas; but, as it happens, the work is shown to be not only an occasion for inane vocal fanaticism, of which Cotrubas is anyway not capable of producing much. *La Sonnambula* is a case-history of romantic imagination, of its mental truncheons and its necessary credulity — a cisalpine answer to *Der Freischütz*, first performed ten years earlier, in 1821.

In that opera, Weber allies the romantic imagination with fearful hauntings and a preposterous, superstitious credulity; Bellini, less guilty about imagination's traffic with demons, has his own version of this credulity in the fables of the Swiss peasants about their local phantasm. The Count derides their folklore but capitulates to it when he mistakes the sleep-walking Amina for that itinerant village bogey. In Weber's German forests, the imagination conjures up devils, but Bellini's spirits are benign, and a tribute to the trusting literalness of his rustics, who like Wordsworth's country people are unselfconscious romantics. The Count is willing to suspend his disbelief for a while, but analytically demolishes the vision when he instructs the villagers that Amina is a sleep-walker: they don't understand the term, and have to be told that it's compounded from the words for "andare" and "dormire". All charms fly at this mere touch of frigid philology. Yet though his diagnosis undoes the illusion, Amina's experience reinforces it. Her credulity is, as Keats specified it should be for the "young poetical appetite", a reverent faith. She envisions something and, generating Eve, awakes to find it true. Fantasy has the power to find actuality, to coerce creation. Having lost Elvino, in her second sleep-walking scene she dreams of her union with him, and when roused finds him there waiting to reclaim her.

In enacting the Count's medical hypothesis as she teeters about the mill-stream in her trance, she is also subtly repudiating it — for to the astonished villagers her sonnambulism is as much a wonder and a mystery as the antics of their resident phantom, and she herself learns when she awakes, that imagination can alter reality and embody its own fond desires. *Der Freischütz* ends with the pious exorcism of the fiendish which lurk in the romantic mind; *La Sonnambula* ends by pastorally placating them, investing them in the surrounding landscape as familiar tutelary gods, who will make the earth on which we live — as Amina sings — a paradise of love.

Filippo Sanjust's production theatrically exemplifies this same romantic state of credulity which saves Amina. His village is an angular succession of canvas flats, his alpine cyclorama has wrinkles where its crevices ought to be, and his waterfall is a story-book cut-out with stairs for the chorus in the middle of its torrent; but these makeshift, approximate devices require us to trust them and in doing so we supply them with their third dimension by our own willing suspension of disbelief, the romantic disarming of reason which the theatre exists to effect. Visconti in his 1952 production demolished dramatic illusion in

order to double theatrical illusion, staging the work as a nineteenth-century performance of an opera, with Callas no simpering rustic but a bejewelled prima donna. This self-complimenting irony wouldn't suit Ileana Cotrubas, who touchingly demonstrates Amina's simplicity and is thus able to validate her visionary truc by singing about it, just as Keats said the imagination could gain its food by hungrily dreaming of it.

Though the more florid vocal antics sound hard and screechy from monologues she is ideal, uttering the Bellinian *bel canto* as a vocal trance, a meditative reverie, an unending stream of sound on which the char-

acter floats towards a destination within herself. Robert Lloyd as the Count has the same vocal finesse, and for his character too the purpose of *bel canto* is visionary introspection and retrospection, the journey back into himself which — like Norma and Adalgisa in their duet of recollection, "Oh rimembranza", in Bellini's greatest opera — he undertakes when, in "Vi ravviso", he recognizes his natal landscape. The Elvino of Dennis O'Neill is blustering and un-stylish. The conductor in Bellini is the accompanist, not the leader, of these vocally self-memorized sing-ers, and Manfred Ramin, the hus-band of Cotrubas, has the deference and tact to be expected from a con-sort. The production returns, with a new Amina, in July: it ought to be seen.

Speaking for themselves

By Stanley Wells

Troilus and Cressida
BBC TV

Terry Hands's production of *Troilus and Cressida* at the Aldwych earlier this year was accused, with some justice, of interpretative excess. The charge is not likely to be brought against Jonathan Miller's television version. The difference in approach is typified in the treatment of the Prologue. At the Aldwych it was spoken, in character, by Thersites, thus setting the tone for a production which took a generally satirical view of the play's characters and events. On television it is delivered by an unseen speaker, courteously, anonymously, with neither rhetoric nor passion.

Jonathan Miller's whole production is similarly dispassionate. It is dours, and on that circular outdoor space, to which familiarity is endearing. Yet though his diagnosis undoes the illusion, Amina's experience reinforces it. Her credulity is, as Keats specified it should be for the "young poetical appetite", a reverent faith. She envisions something and, generating Eve, awakes to find it true. Fantasy has the power to find actuality, to coerce creation. Having lost Elvino, in her second sleep-walking scene she dreams of her union with him, and when roused finds him there waiting to reclaim her.

The camera work is unobtrusive, with some beautifully lit close-ups; long stretches are played with no shift in perspective. The action unfolds with exemplary clarity, except in the difficult scene in which on the one hand Troilus and Ulysses, on the other hand Thersites, oversee, over-hear and comment upon Diomedes and Cressida; in spite of some striking shots of Troilus and Ulysses in the foreground, observing the lovers' shadows on the wall of their tent, the scene's complex counterpoint is not fully realized. Except for a few scenes, mostly in the complicated battle placed pedantry that insists on the pronunciation "Trojan" for "Trojan". There is an implicit acknowledgment that this is a play in which what is said is of paramount importance.

This production method leaves the interpretative balance, to be determined largely by the strength and quality of individual performances. Many here have a restraint which matches the production style. Nestor (Geoffrey Chater) is sprightly, not doddering; Agamemnon (Veron Dobicheff) dignified, not a caricature

of pomposity. Some of the lesser figures are nicely touched in: Peter Whitbread brings Calchas to life as a slippery traitor, Anthony Pedley makes Ajax's stupidity touchingly credible. The central heroic conflict, between Achilles and Hector, is powerfully realized; Kenneth Haigh with Patroclus (Simon Cutler), but John Shrapnell as an inactive, finely spoken Hector; his ignominious death, only partially shown, lacks the impact that it usually makes in the theatre; we are conscious of him finally rather as a victim than as a hero.

One source of the play's ambiguity is the number and variety of characters who comment rather than act. Much of its philosophic and poetic potential inheres in the role of Ulysses. Benjamin Whitrow fails to persuade us that his words spring from inner conviction; the verse is jerkily delivered, with an irritating attempt to suggest meaningfulness by misplaced pauses. But he listens sympathetically to Troilus.

The two other major commentators are more heavily characterized. Charles Gray brings to Pandarus every cliché in the book for the portrayal of an elderly queen. As if to toy with the links between them Thersites, too, is outrageous, camp, a bald transvestite (Ajax does call him "Mistress Thersites"), doing Achilles' sewing and washing while chuntering criticism to himself, sharp-tongued but oddly suggesting a kind of compassion for the victims of his scurrilousy. The actor playing the role is known as the Incredible Orlando; it is bold casting, an ingenious way of quelling the notion that Thersites presents the author's point of view.

The private values of the play centre on its title characters. Cressida has often seemed the more important, but Suzanne Burden, chastely beautiful, her hair in long chestnut ringlets, gives us nothing below the surface. A virgin Cressida is acceptable in the early scenes; but she must do more than this to convince us of her complex womanliness, her sensuous intelligence, her passion. Troilus, for once, becomes a major figure. Anton Lesser, physically slight, looks no warrior, but his high tenor voice is controlled with imaginative expressiveness; there seems in him no gap between thought, emotion, and expression. He plays a Troilus who is wholly sympathetic (though not wholly admirable), an adolescent overwhelmed by love, shocked and embittered by disillusionment. It is a poignant portrayal which reaches the heart of the role.

I watched this production with interest and respect, but for me it does not convey that sense of the regulating futility of war, the pathetic grandeur of the human challenge to oblivion through heroism and love, of which (as Peter Hall's 1960 production supremely showed) the play is capable.

Bacon and the U.G.C.

By Stephen Fender

The House of Learning
BBC Radio

It is odd that the Anglo-Saxons, so rich in Nobel prizes, should be so poor at dramatizing intellectual pursuits in their normal setting of laboratory and library. In our literature and popular culture (always excepting the novels of John Banville) the excitement of discovery is displaced to the worlds of detective and spy, while intellectuals are reduced to comic-book figures of fun like Sylvanus.

Martyn Wade's radio play is squarely in the tradition. It is about the last month in the life of Francis Bacon — not the author of the *Essays* and *The Advancement of Learning* who, according to Sprat, "had the tenor" of the Royal Society, but the scholar in disgrace, sacked for corruption from the civil service, desperately trying to sort out the complex categories of *The Great Instauration* before he dies. His personal physician is none other than William Harvey, who has taken time off from discovering the circulation of the blood to give the old man a "check-up" and warn him against overdoing it. Harvey has little sympathy with Bacon's theoretical research, and besides, as he says, the smell of old parchment "gets up my nose". Bacon's chaplain and secretary, William Rawley, is even more contemptuous of his patron, evading his querulous calls for help in the library and making off with the girl-

friend of the local chicken farmer, after the last named has been pressed into service as an amanuensis. The farmer, by the way, turns out to have suggested the only practical experiment to emerge from this manic ivory tower (and the one that notoriously killed the old man with a stuffing it with snow).

Meanwhile, as a running gag, a foreign envoy called (I think) Salvador Jacinto Pollo de Medina keeps trying to get Bacon's attention in the vain assumption that he still has enough influence with the King to end the Spanish war. He exits in high dudgeon when Bacon takes him for "one of the capacious minds of Europe" anxious to finance his research.

Among this week's contributors

KINGSLEY AMIS's most recent novel is *Russian Hide and Seek*, 1980.

HAROLD BRAVER is Reader in American Literature at the University of Warwick.

ALAN BELL's biography of Sydney Smith was published last year.

PHILIP COLLINS's books include *Dickens's Public Readings*, 1975, and *Dickens's David Copperfield*, 1977.PETER CONRAD's books include *Romantic Opera and Literary Form*, 1977, and *Imagining America*, 1980.DAN DAVIN's books include *Closing Times*, 1975.ANTHONY DELIUS's most recent book is a novel, *Border*, 1977.A. A. M. DUNCAN is the author of *Scotland: The Making of the Kingdom*, 1975.JOHN HOLLOWAY's collections of poems include *Wood and Windfall*, 1965, and *Planet of Winds*, 1977.SIMON JENKINS is political editor of the *Economist*.

DANIEL KARLIN is a lecturer in English at University College London.

J. P. KENYON's books include *Revolution: Principles*, 1977, and *Stuart England*, 1978.

JAMES KIRKUP teaches Comparative Literature at Kyoto University of Foreign Studies.

STEPHEN KOS's *The Rise and Fall of the Political Press in Britain*, Volume One: *The Nineteenth Century*, was published earlier this year.GORDON LEFF is the author of *Dissolution of the Medieval Outlook*, 1976.

PETER LEWIS is a lecturer in English Studies at the University of Durham.

GARETH B. MATTHEWS is the author of *Philosophy and the Young Child*, 1980.RICHARD MURPHY's *Selected Poems* was published last year.

IAN NISH is Professor of International History at the London School of Economics.

DAVID NOBES is a lecturer in English at King's College, London.

IDRIS PARRY's books include *Hand To Mouth*, a collection of essays on literature published in September.MAE RICHARD is preparing *The Oxford Companion to Children's Literature*, with Humphrey Carpenter.JOHN RYLE's book *Warrors of the White Nile* will be published early next year.C. H. SISSON's translation of *The Divine Comedy* was published last year.FRANCES SPALDING is the author of *Roger Fry: Art and Life*, 1980.

PETER STEIN is Regius Professor of Civil Law in the University of Cambridge.

R. L. STOREY's books include *Chronology of the Medieval World, 800 to 1491*, 1972.STEPHEN THOMAS's book *All That Summer She Was Mad: Virginia Woolf and her Doctors* will be reviewed shortly in the TLS.

STANLEY WELLS is General Editor of the Oxford Shakespeare.

RICHARD WOLLHEIM is Grote Professor of Mind and Logic at University College London.

The Ethics of Abortion

Sir, — Peter Singer's notice of L. W. Sumner's *Abortion and Moral Theory* (October 30) presents an unfortunately narrow summary of the literature of the subject. The anthology *The Morality of Abortion: Legal and Historical Perspectives* (1970), *Abortion and Social Justice* (1972), and *New Perspectives on Human Abortion* (1981) come immediately to mind, and among single-author books Germain Grisez's *Abortion: the Myths, the Realities, and the Arguments* (1970) and John Noonan's *A Private Choice: Abortion in America in the Seventies* (1979) should not have been omitted.

Peter Singer says that the unborn child is "parasitic" on the mother. Whether this term is Sumner's or his own, it is inappropriate. In the technical sense a parasite is, among other things, a member of a different species than the host. In popular usage the term is an emotionally loaded pejorative.

The charge is frequently made that the right life movement is trying to impose its moral, religious, or philosophical beliefs on society. Peter Singer's review shows that the charge applies to supporters of abortion. To say that not all living members of the human species are human persons, that one must meet additional criteria before one is acknowledged as a human being whose right to life is protected by law, is to promote a highly conjectural and dangerous philosophical view which the law currently imposes on society. Singer and Sumner say that full human status is achieved some time during pregnancy. Michael Tooley argues that it is achieved some time after birth, thus justifying infanticide. (The increasing reports of infanticide in hospitals indicate that many physicians are putting this theory into practice.) The sanctity of human life should have a stronger safeguard than the competing theories of philosophers.

When heart transplants were first performed there was general recognition of the need for accepted criteria defining death, so that one would not kill the donor by removing his heart while he was still alive. Removing the heart prematurely would be wrong, even though the prospective recipient would die if he did not receive a new heart promptly. The prospective donor does not have to prove that he is still alive. The surgeon bears the moral burden of proving that the prospective donor, who is unquestionably human, is no longer alive. Similarly the abortionist bears the moral burden of proving that the foetus, who is unquestionably alive, is not yet human. Anyone who operates in the absence of such proof demonstrates a willingness to kill an innocent human being.

MARTIN W. HELGESEN.
11 Lawrence Avenue, Malverne, New York 11565.

Transylvania and Gad's Hill

Sir, — Prince Cosma Albertus, concerning whom Patrick Leigh Fermor writes (Letters, November 13), is mentioned in the notes of Anthony à Wood with the remark "was commonly reported that he was a cheat and no prince" (*The Life and Times of Anthony Wood*, ed. A. Clark, 5 vols., Oxford: 1891-1900). This supposition is rather confirmed by the fact that there is no reference to Cosma Albertus in the contemporary correspondence of Charles II's ministers. If Cosma Albertus had been a genuine exiled prince he would surely have sought some contact with the English government, whereas if he was a fraud he would naturally have wished to avoid official investigation.

The information concerning Cosma Albertus given by G. H. Palmer in his *Rochester: the Cathedral and the See* is probably derived from a

pamphlet entitled *A true and exact relation of the... murder lately committed upon Prince Cosma Albertus by his own attendants, near Rochester in Kent*, which is in the British Library.

JOHN SCHELLENBERGER,
60 St Barnabas Road, Cambridge.

Military Drinking

Sir, — In tracing the origins of the Greek Symposium to military tradition, Oswyn Murray (November 6) notes the warmth with which Plato defends that tradition against Spartan puritanism. The Athenian in the *Laws* argues that young soldiers should be encouraged to drink in their good company, partly to diagnose their behaviour under stress, and partly to learn a special sort of self-control. It would be helpful to know whether there is any sense in this argument, or whether Plato is merely rationalizing the indulgence of his youth. Sobriety would suit the close-order tactics of the Spartan phalanx, but could the more open methods of Athenian naval and amphibious operations have justified a different approach? The topic is as controversial today as it was in the 4th century, but that may be a further reason for asking those with relevant experience to record it.

P. H. BLYTH.
University of London Institute of Education, Classical Studies Department, St Mary's College, Strawberry Hill, Twickenham TW1 4SX.

Prince Sapieha

Sir, — Both Peter Hebblethwaite and Jedrejz Gierzycki need a little correction on Cardinal Sapieha (Letters, October 16). He was called "Prince-Prince-Prince", (1) because he was born a Prince; (2) because he was Prince-Bishop (and since 1925 Prince-Archbishop) in virtue of an Imperial decision of Franz Joseph of 1889 by which the Bishops of Cracow (part of the Austrian Monarchy since 1848) received the title of Prince; and (3) because he was Cardinal (and therefore Prince of the Church) since 1946.

It is not wrong to say that "even in the twentieth century his title [meaning n° 2] has not been abolished", but its use is discontinued (even for the present Prince-Primate of Hungary where it had a constitutional meaning) until the present Republic is reconstituted (into being) since Pope Pius XII asked all prelates whose sees have a title of nobility attached, not to use such titles. These secular titles were however never used by the Roman Curia, not even for those prelates within the Papal States who owed them to Papal grant, or, more generally, to Imperial grants.

To our knowledge, the only Bishop who should still use the title of "Co-Prince (of Andorra)" is the Bishop of Urgel in Spain, because he actually exercises some form of secular authority in the Principality of Andorra.

The last Archbishop who actually used the honorary title of "Prince-Archbishop" were, to our knowledge, Cardinal Mindszenty (rather "Prince-Primate" of Hungary), Archbishop Rohrer of Salzburg, and Archbishop de Ferrari of Trent.

The only other ecclesiastic bearing a "secular" title in virtue of his office is the Pope as "Sovereign of the State of Vatican City".

The only countries where personal titles of nobility are used at present by ecclesiastics are Western Germany and the United Kingdom, where, until he died, Dom Peter Gilbey, OSB was Lord Vaux of Harrowden.

LUDOVICO M. BONCOMPAGNI
Rome.

P. G. Wodehouse

Sir, — I recently, in a review in your columns of a book about some problems in the books of P. G. Wodehouse, made a thumping factual error, and apologized for it. But I must take up Stephen Medcalf on a point when he writes (Letters, November 13) that "no one who attacks P. G. Wodehouse ever fails to make at least one thumping factual error..." and then goes on to correct a t.e. by your correspondent J. W. Bruegel.

Of Wodehouse's foolishness and innocence in the matter of the broadcast I, in common with Wodehouse, his friend Townsend and Mr Medcalf, have no doubt. But I wish Wodehouse (in a letter published on May 8, 1946 in the American show-biz paper *Variety*), Townsend (in *Performing Flea*) and now Stephen Medcalf had not quoted that thing about the late Air-Marshal Boyd. Townsend quotes it from a letter (no date given) written to Wodehouse by one John Leeming (whom Wodehouse did not then know). In this letter Leeming said that he had been personal assistant to Air-Marshal Boyd of the RAF and they had been prisoners of war together in Italy. "He [the Air-Marshal] read your broadcasts and gave them to me, saying 'Why the Germans ever let him say all this I cannot think... Wodehouse has probably been shot by now...'"

How did the Air-Marshal get scripts of Wodehouse's talks from Berlin in a POW camp in Italy? It is clear that William Connor had not read the BBC monitored transcripts of Wodehouse's first talks (they would have been available) when he attacked Wodehouse on the BBC radio for many years. When Major Cussen of M15 (RAF in late 1944) interrogated the Wodehouses, liberated Paris, Wodehouse had difficulty in providing him with scripts of all five of his Berlin talks. We in England had to wait until *Encounter* published texts of the talks in 1954 and the Penguin *Performing Flea* the same texts in 1961.

I repeat: how did the Air-Marshal and his PA (presumably an officer, as they were in the same camp) read them in Italy as prisoners of war? This point has always worried me. I think Townsend, Wodehouse and Medcalf missed it.

RICHARD USBORNE.
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The Uses of Obscurity

Sir, — To have one book reviewed by Peter Kemp and to be counted a misfortune but to have my review six together (November 13) is outrageous. Fired by his crusade against "the current trend" in criticism, he concocted a review which was not only flippant and superficial, but determined to make diverse books fit his prejudices.

I cannot speak for the other poor victims, but I cried with frustration when I read his crude misrepresentation of my own book *The Uses of Obscurity*. Where other reviewers have found in it a clearly written historical account of changes in the novel at the end of the nineteenth century, Kemp only finds what his whole review sets out to prove: that my book, like the others, is jargon-filled, theory-dominated and pays scant respect to the particularity of texts or authors. These assertions are simply false and I can only say that when Kemp accuses me of having to "warp the evidence to make it fit his case" he is describing his review and not my book.

To show that *The Uses of Obscurity* is jargon-ridden Kemp quotes a sentence, with a difficult German word in it which he misspells, also omitting the second half of my sentence in which I supply a translation:

'The Day of the Triffids'

Sir, — T. A. Shippey, reviewing *The Day of the Triffids*, BBC TV (November 6), writes that "The Midwich Cuckoos ends with Gordon Zerkon intoning *Si fueris Romani Romani vivito more* (subjunctive and all)..." *Vivito* is imperative and *fueris* is here surely a future perfect indicative.

JOHN GORNALL.
Moss Cottage, Tattenhall, nr Chester.

'Images of Chelsea'

Sir, — Bamber Gascoigne (Letters, November 6) ignores the major criticisms of his book contained in my review (February 20), and concentrates instead on minor points relating to the catalogue section. Alas, he chooses the wrong hairs to split. His list of etchings by Roussel is not infallible: "The Little Barge", and even "The Window Cleaner", have just as much — or just as little — topographical content as "Pleasure Boats" or "Events Over the Railings". Moreover, I am not as unacquainted with the Bodleian as he seems to believe. The following items should certainly have been included in Mr Ditchburn's catalogue:

Bodleian: R. English, "View of HM's Royal Hospital of Chelsea" (c 1730), Gough Maps, vol XVII, f 29v-30r, with accompanying garden plan, f 31r; "Chelsea Bridge" (published by C. Dacey, late 18th century), vol XVII, f 33v; E. Oakley, "Garden House, Physic Garden" (c 1732), Gough Gen. Top., vol LXIII, f 15; and variant states of Ditchburn, nos 252 (s and d 1739), 319, 515 in Gough Maps, vol XVII, ff 34r, 36v, 35r.

Ashtolean: From the Hope Collection: J. Savage, "Chelsea Parochial School" (c 1824); "Chelsea Hospital" (large woodcut, c 1850); "Chelsea Hospital" (six wood engravings, 1856); and variant states of Ditchburn nos 24, 49, 203 (published 1776) providing earlier states of 109 and 201. From the Sutherland-Clairemont: variant state of Ditchburn 30 (C.III, 51).

These are not trivial additions. The print of Chelsea Hospital after R. English is more than twice as large as any print listed in *Images of Chelsea*. As to the remainder of Gascoigne's letter, I decline to comment on his use of private and partly facetious — correspondence.

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FOREIGNERS

The Making of American Literature, 1900-1940

by MARCUS KLEIN

Around the turn of the century there was cultural chaos in America, caused by industrialization, urbanization, the rise of corporate business, institutionalized political corruption and mass immigration. Klein is concerned in *Foreigners* with the consequences for literature. He deals with Eliot, Hemingway, Gertrude Stein and other writers of the "modernist movement" with ethnic literature, proletarian writings, detective fiction, documentaries, critical studies and poems... and he finds that the significant literature is the creation of those who felt themselves to be marginal Americans, whether by birthright or by act of the imagination. Published November, £11.50.

CHICAGO

The University of Chicago Press
128 Buckingham Palace Road, London SW1W 6SD



on kinship, lordship and the feud as a "force for peace" are gems in a very fine setting. She likes James IV who, she thinks, was popular, while James V was not, a simplistic judgment (who counted the votes?) which contrasts with her sophisticated analysis of their patronage of the arts and their greedy management of the Scottish church.

I cannot do full justice to her account of the reforming of the church. It will not please those who believe reform was God's will or Knox's doing, or both; indeed it will not please those who believe reform was all about the state of the church, and in particular the failings of bishops and of the parochial clergy. For Dr Wormald has struck out on her own, taking the reforming acts of the kirk, Catholic and then Protestant, at their face value to stress the centrality of faith, and the uncertainties of Catholic teaching in contrast to the "militant aggressive Calvinist" offering. She is rightly scornful about historians' concern with the struggle of the reformed kirk for the Auld Kirk's resources - ministers were well paid, Knox particularly so, and indeed it is arguable that once in the saddle the Reformed Kirk could have divided nearly evenly between minister and schoolmaster more equitably, without danger to the soul of either and with considerable benefit to the young scholars of the parish.

Perhaps the best part of a very good book is the commentary upon Scotland in the time of James VI. There is

an excellent discussion of the economy using the few statistics available on population, price rises and the fall in real wages, a contrast with rather uncritical acceptance of bullionist ideas for earlier times, e.g. that Elizabeth "rescued" England from "economic straits". Again the administrative structures and social mores of the local communities are nicely balanced by the cultural achievements of the royal court. I dissent from Dr Wormald's judgment that the monarchy was not interested in a long ancestry but preferred to stress their origin as stewards, to the bishops (not counts - see Barrow) of Dol and then to the Scottish kings. I know of no acknowledgment of their Breton origin; Banquo and Fionn, however, were part of a work of imagination presented as a history of a Scottish kingdom older than the empire of Rome, a pseudo-Livy "history" which captured the patronage of James V and pleased James VI well enough.

Dr Wormald is surely right to stress the claims which Scottish society made in this period upon European culture, though I doubt if she is right to contrast Scotland with England in this regard. Indeed if her Scotland seems needlessly prickly, complacent or pompous about its achievements and strident in its demand for recognition, that may be about right. This Scotland was in Europe as a small, pushy, poor, peripheral but participating nation; Dr Wormald tells it like it was, and is the more interesting and successful for doing so.

Escaping to the heather

By Lachlan Mackinnon

JENNI CALDER (Editor):
Stevenson and Victorian Scotland
141pp. Edinburgh University Press. £5.00 85234 399 5

In her introduction to this symposium, Jenni Calder says rightly that "problems of language and style account in part for the evasive critical reactions that Stevenson's work has generated for over a century. Ultimately, before a complete assessment of his achievement can be made, this will have to be explored more closely." She stresses also the closeness between Stevenson's life and his work, and it is on the life and its background that most of the contributors focus.

David Dalches offers an account of Stevenson's Scotland as a conflation of opposites, "Bohemianism and Calvinism, Art and Morality, the City and the Country". Michael Ballfour describes the shenanigans which surrounded the writing of the first biography, while Trevor Royle looks at literary Edinburgh, "a shadow of its former self", as Stevenson experienced it. Royle's account is packed with fact, and is an extremely useful introduction to the period. Christopher Harvie looks at Stevenson's politics, which he finds to be "authoritarian but - unlike Kipling - feudal and familial rather than technocratic".

All these contributions are informative about their chosen specialities, but they fail to bring us any closer to a full view of Stevenson. The limitations of the biographical approach are most plainly apparent in L. C. Furnas's "Stevenson and Exile", which tells us both about Stevenson's illness (probably bronchitis) and about the ways in which his sensibility profited from migration. The conclusion reached is both fair and, it seems, accidentally revelatory. Furnas says of Stevenson's exile that "A return of any duration risked a clattering up with details and petty memories of the staid, starchy, grayer, gaunter, windier Edinburgh that, in certain emotional weather, he saw out of his workroom window overlooking the Firth." To suggest that Stevenson saw his background as a castle in the air is extremely plausible. Stevenson's real life was those of a charming fantasist, as is implicit in W. W. Robertson's insistence about *Unfinished* that "there is no more sustained account of his physical ordeal in the literature." This book on the Stevenson problem, however, is the first to

the novel's Lowland-Highland, romantic-practical, vanity-pride distinctions, which holds the imagination. Stevenson's writing is at its best when it quits the moral world of the Apollonian murder for the contingent, chancy world of the flight, which is a fantasist's release and which wins us precisely by its fantastic plausibility. Stevenson appeals to a primitive, mythic layer of the imagination with unusual power, but there is in his work a central evasiveness which calls up an answering evasiveness in his critics.

Douglas Gifford's re-reading of *The Master of Ballantrae* takes us further towards the truth. He proposes that we should take Ephraim Mackellar with more salt than is usual, pointing to the unsubstantiated vilifications of the Master which infiltrate his narrative. Gifford suggests that Mackellar is structurally mirrored by Secundus Dass as a conflation of loyal shadows who are unable to avert a crisis which is essentially inward and psychological. Mackellar is also set against the Chevalier Burke, whose florid, self-aggrandizing narrative is of the opposite kind to his own but whose presence reminds us to be chary of even the most honest-seeming witness. Gifford finds *The Master of Ballantrae* powerful because of its structural complexity, and thinks it offers a more shaded moral view than the innocent reader supposes.

Gifford's account is ingenious and likeable: it is the kind of respectful attention we instinctively want to give Stevenson. We want the machinery of *The Master* to work, but we want this because of the Master himself. James is by far the most exciting figure in the book - not attractive, but engaging. He grips imagination, and reason wants

With the appearance of *Scottish Methodism in the Early Victorian Period: The Scottish Correspondence of the Rev. James Bunting, 1800-57* (Edinburgh University Press, £8.95 85234 412 5) the publication of the Bunting correspondence which intermittently has occupied more than a century, is now complete. Bunting, four times President of Conference, the "Methodist Pope" of the 1820s to the 1840s, at a time when the connection was under severe pressure from Free Methodist secessionists, ready to challenge Bunting's dictum that "Methodism was as opposed to democracy as was to sin". These conflicts are well brought out by the editors, A. J. Hayes and D. A. Gowland, in their introduction, and they offer, too, a succinct account of the precarious condition of Scottish Methodism during this period. The letters of Bunting

Squaring rules with reason

By Peter Stein

JAMES, VISCOUNT STAIR:
The Institutions of the Law of Scotland
Edited by David M. Walker
1186pp. Edinburgh University Press.
£40.
0 85234 397 9

Scottish nationhood is based on two distinctive institutions, the Scots Kirk and the Scots Law, and when the Treaty of Union with England of 1707 was negotiated, the Scots insisted that their continued existence be safeguarded. Scots have tended to look on both of them as not only showing their difference from the English but also as reflecting their particular national characteristics. Whereas English law is regarded as technical, obscure and bedevilled by antiquarian formalities, Scots law is perceived as rational, coherent and oriented towards principle rather than precedent. In the nineteenth century much of Scots law was assimilated to English law, often as a result of the supine attitudes of

fellow-travelling Scots lawyers themselves. But such claims as the modern Scots law has to conform to the ideal are largely the result of the exposition it received in a single work, Lord Stair's *Institutions*, published in 1681. The tercentenary of its publication is an appropriate occasion for a new edition.

The work appeared at a vital moment in the history of Scots law, a quarter of a century before the Union. It was intended, in the first place, to provide an authoritative account of the whole of Scots law, then a disparate mass of customary rules, precedents and statutes, stitched together with strips of Roman law. Sir Edward Coke had done something similar for English law in his *Institutes* about half a century earlier. Both Coke and Stair wrote with enormous authority and in both cases their exposition almost obviated any need to consult the older authorities. But there the resemblance ends. As Maitland put it, Coke "shovels out his enormous learning in vast, disorderly heaps". For Stair, form was as important as substance. He wanted to write not only a compendium of the established rules of Scots law but also to demonstrate how those rules formed a rational and coherent system. When Coke spoke of reason, he meant an artificial reason which was peculiar to the English common law. For Stair, reason indicated the principles of natural law, as publicized by Grotius and the Protestant natural law writers of the Continent.

Coke wrote exclusively for his fellow lawyers, and would not have expected his work to be read by those outside the craft. Stair wanted his book to be not only profitable to lawyers, but also "pleasant and useful to all persons of honour and discretion". Although there are undoubtedly some passages that a gentleman would have found tough going, on the whole he succeeded in producing a work of literature as well as of law.

These differences were due partly to the period in which Stair wrote (he was an older contemporary of John Locke), partly to the international attitude of Scots lawyers to their profession (prospective members of the Scottish Bar customarily attended the law faculties of the Netherlands universities), and partly to the character of Stair himself. Like Coke he was deeply engaged in the public affairs of his country, as well as in legal practice, but unlike Coke he was also interested in branches of learning other than the law.

James Dalrymple, created first Viscount of Stair in 1690, was born in 1619 into a family of Ayrshire gentry. Between the ages of fourteen and eighteen, he followed the arts course at Glasgow University, graduating first in his class. He began to prepare himself for the law but was diverted to join the army of the National Covenant, formed to defend Protestant principles against Charles II's Prayer Book. Then, instead of returning immediately to the law, he served for six years as a Regent at Glasgow University, responsible for guiding a group of students through the whole of the arts curriculum. In 1648 he was finally admitted to the Faculty of Advocates and began to practise at the Bar. But he retained his extra-legal interests and nearly forty years later, while in exile in the Netherlands, he published an admittedly rather old-fashioned treatise on experimental philosophy based on the Ptolemaic idea that the earth is the centre of the universe.

Although, like other leading advocates, Dalrymple refused to take the oath of allegiance to Cromwell, he was nonetheless made a judge under the Protectorate, and when the Court of Session was re-established as Scotland's Supreme Court after the Restoration of Charles II, he became one of its members. In 1663 he resigned rather than admit that the National Covenant was an unlawful oath, but six months later an accommodation was reached with the government and he was re-admitted.

He had already decided to remedy the deficiencies of Scottish legal literature in two ways. First, he began to collect reports of the judicial decisions of the Court of Session, expressly with a view to publication. There were several manuscript "practicks" in circulation, but these were fragmentary collections giving only brief accounts of decisions, mixed with procedural hints for the practitioner. Dalrymple wanted to show, by full reports, the reasoning behind the decisions. Secondly, he began his institutional exposition of the law, and manuscripts of his early drafts were in existence in the early 1660s.

In 1671 he was made Lord President of the Court of Session. At the same time he extended his activities outside the court by becoming a member of the Privy Council, which was effectively the government of Scotland, and also entered Parliament as commissioner for Wigornshire. In 1681 he published the first edition of his *Institutions*, observing in the dedication to Charles II that until then, "my modesty did not permit me to publish it, lest it be judged to be a piece of vanity". In the same year he refused to take the oath under the Test Act, required by the Royal Commissioner, the future James VII and II, and fled to the Netherlands. There he adhered to the cause of William of Orange and in 1688 sailed to England with William, who restored him to his office.

Stair was probably not a very happy man; his wife was said to be a witch and his daughter was the model for Scott's *Bride of Lammermoor*. He was violently attacked for complicity in governmental oppression and for partiality on the bench, and in a public defence observed that he had three times given up his office on issues of principle. He was indeed a man of principles, but one who usually managed to find a way of accommodating them to the needs of his career. In an age of extreme views he was a man of moderation, and it is this moderation which provides the key to the success of the *Institutions*.

The sources of Scots law were in a new and Stair wanted to show that underlying the apparent muddle was a system based on principles, which were recognizably those shared by the civilized nations of Europe. Yet he assiduously cited the existing authorities for every rule, so that the practitioner's needs were served.

Particularly in the law of contract he was able to integrate a relatively small number of decisions into an elegant scheme of rules, derived from the Roman civil law, which was much more suited to the needs of a nascent commercial society than the contemporary English law. As he himself said it,

There is not much here asserted upon mere authority, or imposed for no other reason but *quia melioribus placuit*; but the rational motives, inductive of the several laws and customs, are there unfolded forth. And though the application of those common rules to the variety of cases determined by our statutes, our ancient customs, and the more recent decisions of our supreme courts be peculiar to us; yet even the quadrate of these to the common maxims of reason and justice may make them the more pleasing, and that no nation hath so few words of art, but that almost all our terms are near the common and vulgar acceptance.

Since its publication, Stair's *Institutions* has been constantly cited in Scotland and seldom elsewhere. It has been edited three times since Stair's death, most recently in 1932, but the editors took liberties with the text. David M. Walker gives us the text of the second edition of 1693, the "last issued by the author, and provides modern references to the citations of authorities, an informative introduction and, especially, a full index in a work of this kind, a new and comprehensive index. The edition is presented in a format worthy of the occasion.

Families and their followings

By R. L. Storey

JOHN GILLINGHAM:
The Wars of the Roses
Peace and Conflict in Fifteenth-Century England
274pp. Weidenfeld and Nicolson.
£12.50.
0 297 77630 4
ANTHONY GOODMAN:
The Wars of the Roses
Military Activity and English Society, 1452-97
394pp. Routledge and Kegan Paul.
£12.55.
0 7100 0728 0

"The Wars of the Roses were, militarily speaking, only a skin eruption on the surface of English life... a period of social disorder which gave rise at intervals to spurts of real warfare." Before G. M. Trevelyan expressed this opinion in 1942, two outstanding specialists on Lancastrian England, C. L. Kingsford and K. B. MacFarlane, had initiated a reappraisal of the customary portrayal of the period as a time of unremitting anarchy, and laid responsibility for the occasional trials of armed strength on a few great lords thus reluctantly attempting to gain more effective influence in the government of whoever was king at each particular stage.

After a decade of increasingly violent swings of political fortune, the "Yorkists" finally resorted to making Edward IV king in 1461, and nine years later Warwick "the kingmaker" restored Henry VI, again as the last option for securing his own ascendancy. The political nation which had accepted and served Edward IV in his "second reign" (1471-83) turned to Henry Tudor, after his promise to marry Edward's eldest daughter, in order to overthrow the intolerable regime of the usurper Richard III. Experience had taught that rebellion could be legitimized, and its gains best underwritten, by transferring the crown to another head, and with it the sole right to

exercise the government of the realm. Subsequent tradition bestowed a recognition of unity on this series of battles and depositions. Sir Walter Scott may have coined the term "Wars of the Roses", but by 1515, according to Polydore Vergil, the common people spoke of the two major factions as the roses, "because the white rose was the emblem of one family and the red rose that of the other." Their kingly ambitions were blamed as the basic cause of England's miseries through "inward war and trouble, unrighteousness, shedding and effusion of innocent blood" and countless other kinds of tribulation, all alleged to have begun with the usurpation of Henry of Lancaster in 1399 and his murder of Richard II.

Edward IV's assertion of his title in parliament in 1461 launched this myth of the blood-stained history of fifteenth-century England. It also suited the interests of the Tudors to remind their subjects of this grim and recent example of divine punishment of a rebellious people. As John Gillingham points out, the invention of printing and royal censorship facilitated this use of history as propaganda. He is by no means performing an original service, however, in "elucidating the historical credibility of the subject of E. M. W. Tillyard's *Shakespeare's History Plays* (1944). Indeed another generation earlier, in 1913, Kingsford had commented on the effect of Shakespeare's historical plays in forming popular opinion on the fifteenth century and thus immortalizing the official Tudor mythology.

Gillingham's refreshing account will please readers who want a plain introduction to his subject; it has good, well-chosen illustrations, and is not burdened with a substantial apparatus of reference, with little use of record evidence. In contrast, Anthony Goodman's scholarly work draws on most available sources of information, among them manuscripts in local record offices; nor is he a newcomer to the study of late medieval England. This learning is

By Gordon Leff

KATHERINE WALSH:
A Fourteenth-Century Scholar and Prelate
Richard FitzRalph in Oxford, Avignon and Armagh
Slipp. Clarendon Press: Oxford
University Press. £25.
0 19 822637 3

The scholar-prelate was one of the phenomena of the later Middle Ages. If he bore little resemblance to a Platonic philosopher-king he was nevertheless pre-eminent in the affairs of both kings and church during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. He belonged to that comparatively recent cadre of university-educated men, trained in philosophy, theology and above all law, to be found in the upper reaches of both temporal and spiritual society, and among the popes themselves. The modern traffic from academia to public life can show nothing to its medieval counterpart.

Richard FitzRalph (c 1300-1360) was a striking example of the breed. Although not an outstanding thinker, and in his later years at variance with both the king of England and the mendicant friars, he was nevertheless one of the most prominent figures in both university and church. His reputation spread throughout Europe, continuing after his death, albeit distorted by his mistaken association with Wyclif. FitzRalph is also perhaps the most revealing figure of the period in pointing to the direction which learning and religion were taking in the comparative calm

put to good effect, with an easy touch, and his appraisal of military strategy and tactics suggests that he has some familiarity with the works of Liddell Hart and so appears to regard Edward IV as the Rommel of his day.

The authors' subtitles illumine their opposed analyses. To Gillingham, fifteenth-century England was a country at peace, its people unaccustomed and unprepared for warfare; the short-term, mostly amateur soldiers set upon each other at the earliest opportunity, the sooner to return to their daily affairs and cease vexing the non-combatant general populace. Certainly the inland south and the midlands had no cause to expect devastation by foreign enemies, and had not continental Europe's need to keep their towns fortified and castles in good repair. The decay of fortifications in this part of England, however, particularly those of towns, should also be related to the decline of population and urban industry consequent to the demographic disasters of the fourteenth century and the still endemic plague. It is notable that two of England's most flourishing late medieval centres, London and Coventry, had defences able to repel attack in 1470. It is less remarkable that Carlisle and Newcastle-upon-Tyne could ward off incursions from Scotland, or that Gloucester barred the Severn crossing.

To support his thesis that English society was well behaved, Gillingham dismisses evidence drawn from judicial proceedings on the plausible grounds that these records naturally report unlawful acts and that it is impossible to compare the level of violence in the fifteenth century with that in other periods. The Paston Letters are, unfortunately, a unique survival from this time, but the perils they report were widely encountered. National judicial records, indeed suggest that the Pastons' East Anglia was one of England's quieter backwaters.

The amount of crime by individual miscreants is not the point at issue in this argument. What is significant in

the law-court material of Henry VI's later years is the high social standing of many accused of unlawful conduct, and the large numbers of followers who aided them. It can hardly be considered just coincidence that the first battles of Lancaster and York followed a dozen years when the recognized leaders of county societies, the same men who were commissioned to keep the peace in their shires, led armed gangs in violent pursuit of personal disputes. In 1450 the House of Commons warned Henry VI that the peace and prosperity of the realm were being jeopardized by his failure to provide justice. The ending of civil warfare was likewise not simply due to Henry VII's victories at Bosworth and Stoke-by-Newark, but owed much to his vigilance and expeditious firmness in curbing riotous gentry; while the nobility was cowed by his exemplary severity.

Both authors rebut a recent notion projected by W. H. Dunham that the total amount of active campaigning between 1455 and 1487 came to only thirteen weeks; Goodman calculates that there were at least 428 days when substantial military forces were on the move, although few campaigns lasted beyond three weeks. Most of those thirty-two years. Most modern specialists have further tended to assert that this sporadic warfare was localized, rarely affected the civilian population in its vicinity, and left the greater part of the country unscathed. One possible exception was the march on London by the "Lancastrian" host early in 1461, although "Yorkist" propaganda probably exaggerated depredations by north-countrymen in order to enlist support in the south.

More extensively, however, Goodman shows that there must have been some dislocation to the course of daily life in much of England. When armies were formed, their cores were the personal followings of the royal protagonists. Their principal fighting strength was supplied by sympathetic, or obedient, nobles who brought their liveried companies of household men and retained

knights and gentry; both lords and retainers were followed by many tenants of their estates, many of whom would therefore be classed as "yeomen". In addition, the king could require town and county communities to provide contingents. The scale of such recruitment can only be illustrated by chance survivals in borough and private archives. A muster-roll made at Bridport, Dorset, shows that the town could produce 180 of men without arms. The accounts of several towns show payments for wages and for equipping their companies; thus in 1455 Coventry spent 38s. 6d. on ashes for its 100 archers, a jazzy outfit for their captain, and a tattered banner.

Apart from such locally paid expenses, towns and villages were obviously deprived, perhaps for some weeks, of the presence and labour of their war-bound menfolk. Then these companies had to march to appointed assembly points, from the south coast to Yorkshire, for instance, or from Norfolk to besiege castles in Northumberland; problems of their supply and behaviour would mark their routes. The military value of civic and rustic levies may have been slight, but the economic and social consequences of their enlistment cannot be ignored. Moreover, by thus tapping "civilian" sources of manpower, the king gave a wider public direct interest in his political difficulties and doubtless ensured widespread desire for an end to the conflict of royalist factions.

As volume 24 in a new series, the Devon and Cornwall Record Society has published *The Accounts and Fabric of Exeter Cathedral, 1279-1333: Part 1: 1279-1326* (212pp. £8.00 901853 24 0; available from the Assistant Secretary, Devon and Cornwall Record Society, 7 The Close, Exeter). In her introduction, the editor, Audrey M. Erskine, outlines the background and the form of the accounts, and also provides information on the fabric fund and a note on translation. The text of the accounts is supplemented with wages lists and an appendix on defective wages lists.

fitting completion of his. She has produced a comprehensive biography of FitzRalph as scholar and ecclesiastic and set him within a European context of the intellectual and ecclesiastical life of the time. This has involved her not only in a thorough re-examination of all the material concerning FitzRalph's life and works but also their milieu and the events to which they belonged. Although she does not attempt a systematic exposition of his thought, she brings coherence to its different phases and establishes many missing connections, especially at Oxford and Avignon. Her full account of the controversy surrounding John XXIII's pronouncement on the beatification, which explains FitzRalph's own questions on the subject, will be especially welcomed. Indeed one of the great strengths of the book is its European and ecumenical perspective, but Dr Walsh also treats FitzRalph thoroughly and illuminatingly. She has no difficulty, on reservations, in showing his inconsistencies of thought and impetuosity in action; and she is particularly critical of the confusions in his treatise on Christ's poverty.

Inevitably, in a work of such comprehensive scope, she has had to cover much familiar ground, and sometimes she falters, as in her discussion of Franciscan poverty. But the total effect is of a considerable work, meticulous in its detail, with an admirable grasp of the whole and unfailingly fair and balanced in its judgments. It is as nearly definitive a study as anyone can hope to achieve in a field where so much remains unexplored. But whatever may come to light, it is highly improbable that the main lines of what she has written will need to be written again.

In the world could not surmount. The very obsession with preaching - becoming an end in itself - in the later Middle Ages only accentuated it in pointing to the gulf. The same divide between ideal and reality can be seen in FitzRalph's doctrine of dominion and grace; although he was not its originator, and Wyclif was to take its implications much further, FitzRalph gave it its definitive stamp, and applied it to disqualify the friars from any jurisdiction. That, in the context of the time, was as practically unattainable as the doctrine's premise, that grace alone justified the exercise of authority and ownership, was unverifiable. It is a measure of FitzRalph's standing at the papal court that, despite the outcry which greeted its appearance in his treatise on Christ's poverty, he was able to present his case there, and even preach before the Pope. The issue, though, remained unresolved at his death, and lapsed with it. Unlike Wyclif, who died in seclusion, FitzRalph was never condemned. Any similarities between them, even over the concept of dominion and grace, were superficial. FitzRalph never extended the concept beyond the friars: his concerns were practical and limited, actuated by conservatism rather than radicalism.

Even the most cursory account of FitzRalph's career shows its singularity. He is one of the few individuals of the epoch who comes to life, and the pioneering studies of Aubrey Gwynn have helped to achieve that. Anyone taking FitzRalph as his subject begins with that asset, to say nothing of Gwynn's proverbial generosity and encouragement, which Katherine Walsh gracefully acknowledges in her dedication of her book to him. Her work is a

preaching which all the preaching

The comedian and his concepts

By Peter Conrad

ALICE GOLDFARB MARQUIS:
Marcel Duchamp: Eros, c'est la vie
A Biography
475pp. New York: Whitston, \$22.50.
0 87875 187 4

Duchamp remains the most vexatious problem in modern art and estimations of him vary extravagantly. He has been called the Leonardo of our century, an engineer of the imagination for whom art is invention not slavish depiction. In her valuable and conscientious biography Alice Goldfarb Marquis considers him to be more intellectually intrepid than Picasso, who after flirting with "artistic abandon" in "Les Femmes d'Alger" retreated at once into decorative conservatism, leaving the future, interrogation of limits and possibilities to Duchamp. But Duchamp can also be considered a sterile spoiler. His persona is the nihilistic one of the practical joker, whose announcement of his presence ends the game. After his renunciation of art in 1923, Duchamp's formal ingenuity degenerated into acrid jesting. He prided himself on his failure by contending that to be an artist it was no longer necessary to bother to manufacture works of art, and thereby begot a progeny of talentless performers and poseurs.

Duchamp began by questioning the conventional assumptions of pictorial art, and in doing so he learned a dandified contempt for the art he was investigating. Abandoning art for chess and imaginative conjecture for the consoling automatism of breathing, he spent the remainder of his life contriving justifications for his loss of faith. Marquis suspects that his demolition of an art he called materialistic and merely perceptual was the angry product of his own incompetence: she notices his difficulties with pictorial representation in his 1910 portrait of his father. His jokes, like the perverse epigrams in Wilde's preface to *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, initially expound an ironic, agnostic catechism, disputing sacred commonplaces. But Duchamp's chosen method of criticism was the derisive trivialization of his own endeavours, and his adversarial position eventually required him to profess indifference to and disbelief in art, which was after all (he declared in 1961) only a "habit-forming drug". He is an aesthete who defrauds himself in the process of negating art.

Each of Duchamp's jokes proposes an aesthetic contradiction, which the fatigue implicit in his disparagement tempts him to leave unresolved. For instance, there is apparently a penetrating wit to his description of painting as mundane manual labour and his wish to end this physical servitude by placing art "at the service of the mind". He explained his own decision to become a painter as an act of exemption. He wanted "social freedom; one doesn't want to go to the office every day". His jibe attacks a romantic aesthetic which describes the painter as an athlete who rejoices in the use of his body whereas the writer's occupation (as in Hazlitt's contrast of the two professions) is sedentary and house-bound, and also impugns the later nineteenth century's notion of the artist as a captain of industry, a tycoon, a tireless and heroic manufacturer. Duchamp's flippancy is profound and unsettling, but it leaves him nowhere to go except ahead into bored retirement. His humour is a dead end, an undialectical arrest to thought. Though Duchamp's aim was the conversion of art from mimesis to conceptual experiment, he was not intellectually energetic enough to avoid the impasse this presents. Comedy is his stylistic reconciliation of himself to defeat - the reflex of his insouciance, the mind's nonchalant shrug.

He succumbs too easily to the contradiction which his wit exposes, and vows to spend his life in the respiration ("my art would be that of living; each second, each breath is a work which is inscribed nowhere"). This martyrdom, to principle is by no

means necessary. His successor Robert Rauschenberg has manoeuvred an exit from Duchamp's self-imposed incarceration and self-mocking silence. Rather than posing, as Duchamp did, an antithesis between the toil of art and the indolent bliss of life ("I like living, breathing, better than working"), Rauschenberg precisely measures the gap dividing art from life and chooses to act, as he has said, in the disputed space between them. What Matta Echaurren called Duchamp's "beautiful gestures" were senaphores expressing disdain and exclusion; Rauschenberg's actions - scavenging in urban gutters for flotsam from which to fabricate art - are enthusiastic incorporations, encouraging life to invade art. His impulse was to rescue Duchamp's subjects from their proud isolation, win them back from art to life when he saw "Why Not Sneeze?" at Philadelphia in 1954 he couldn't resist reaching into the bird-cage to handle one of the marble sugar lumps. The museum guard who warned him off made his own Rauschenbergian statement by defining the object as junk, life's discard, not art's precious and hermetic treasure: "Don't you know you're not supposed to touch that crap?" he barked.

For Duchamp himself, the border between art and life is crossed only at the price of destruction. He derived a sour pleasure from the shattering of his glass painting "The Bride Stripped Bare by her Bachelors, even". Cracked, he said, the glass now belonged again to "this world". In breaking it had shamefully re-materialized itself, collapsed from concept what he called "brain-fact" ("cervelle") into an observable, accident-prone, untrustworthy thing. By affecting to enjoy the catastrophe, Duchamp was able to deprive art of all confidence in its segregation from the mess of life.

In irrational paths

by Frances Spalding

ROLAND PENROSE:
Scrap Book
1900-1981
299pp. Thames and Hudson. £18.
0 500 23344 6

Preferring images to words, Sir Roland Penrose, has chosen to present his life as a scrapbook. The text merely provides a framework on which to hang almost 700 photographs which document his friends, travels, art, exhibitions and books. This disparate collection is rather like the curiosity cabinets - illustrated here - in his London and Sussex homes, filled with figurines, relics, fetishes, ornaments and masks culled from various centuries and countries, as well as shells, bones, snakeskins and coloured sand. His fascination with such collections began when he was a child in his grandfather's home, where he was forbidden to touch the curiosities kept locked away. These Victorian collections made an unforgettable impact on him, and no doubt began his love of the exotic and bizarre. Like the glass in a cabinet preserving objects from the hands of a child, Penrose's ingenuously appears to make everything visible when in fact it protects much.

His aim is in any case not to expose inner motives but to celebrate friendships and the role played by chance. "In early days chance was surprisingly generous in mundane affairs," he begins disarmingly, making light of the well-oiled machinery of his upper-middle-class Edwardian background. It was not until he crossed the Channel in the autumn of 1922 that he was able to slough this love of the exotic and bizarre. Through his friendship with the Greek painter Yanko Vardas, he was introduced to a Mediterranean and a more sensual

But again his humour conceals non-sequiturs in his thinking. Where had the glass been, he was asked, before it returned to "this world" in smelt-recess? Duchamp's response, as Marquis reports it, was another of his evasive metaphysical shrugs: he "threw up his hands and laughed".

Sometimes, as in his discussion of the etiquette which severs art from life, Duchamp glibly acquiesces in his own contradictions; at other times, he seems annoyed by the position in which he has trapped himself, and to long for the freedom to contradict himself. This is now his debate about the relation between artistic and financial value ends. Duchamp's campaign against the correspondence between art and material reality criticizes the transformation of aesthetic merit into monetary credit. For him, it's both an error of taste and a moral failing to cross-breed art with life in this way. His mother, he said, "painted still lifes and wanted to cook them too". She preposterously confused art with aliment. Picasso, rather more viciously, turned his own art into currency. Representation changes from a transcription of material things to a requisitioning of them: as John Berger put it, "whatever [Picasso] wishes to own, he can acquire by drawing it". One possible reaction to this collusion between creativity and lucre is the genial unscrupulousness of Warhol, who has offered to sign any object presented to him and thus confer on it both artistic and financial value: he sees himself as a home-made mint, engaged by the granting of his autograph in the illicit printing of money. Duchamp's reaction was putative the opposite: one, abstinent and penurious. Drinking in a Bowery bar, he complimented the derelict patrons for existing in the same saintly poverty which he envisaged as the condition of his art: "I envy these people because worldly

things mean nothing to them". He paid his debts with a Dadaist pun on this cupola of art and money, handing a cheque to be drawn on "The Teeth's Loan and Trust Co., Consolidated, 2 Wall St."

But twenty years later he repented of the joke and reneged on his own demonstration of art's impropriety in masquerading as a medium of exchange: he repurchased the cheque from the dentist, and complained that he now had to pay "a lot more than it says it's worth". Though Duchamp alleged that disgust with the commercialism of the art market had persuaded him to abdicate in 1923, Miss Marquis's research reveals him to have been a shrewd trafficker in the commodities of others, buying pictures as Walter Arensberg's agent, and an astute trustee of his own artistic wares, advising Katherine Dreier to charge a fee when loaning his "Anemic Cinema" to a museum while fastidiously pretending to find the matter "very unimportant". He despised the cupidity of Pop artists, and differentiated their greed from the abstinence of the Dadaists, but, according to John Cage, Duchamp was "extremely interested in money", and envied the incomes of Jasper Johns and Rauschenberg.

It was the sad fate of Duchamp's concepts to dwindle into paltry and futile conceits. Just as his wit is an elegant admission of his arrival at a dead end, acknowledging the encroachment of a silence which is his self-punishment, so his machines are all exercises in frustration - the masturbatory frenzy of his bachelors, straining to take possession of their self-absorbed and unyielding bride; the insane rotation of his demisphere, sending a nonsensical slogan into orbit; the visual terminus of his occluded window, punningly associated with emotional deprivation, in

Picasso and forty Ernsts, among other works, for £1,500 - Eluard stipulating the price and insisting there should be no further discussion of money. A similar piece of luck brought Penrose some of Picasso's most important Cubist paintings, while his friendship with Picasso enabled him to acquire the famous "Woman Weeping".

This friendship also increased his interest in creativity. Watching Picasso's work develop seemed to Penrose "like being present at a banquet for which the menu was improvised while it was in progress". It was he who persuaded Picasso to allow the "American" to come to England in 1938. He also records how Picasso, to emphasize the flesh expressed by the woman who rushes into the canvas, planned a strip of toilet paper to her hand. Once he appears in this book, Picasso remains a central figure, the king and joker in Penrose's pack.

Whether at Mougins with Picasso or playing a walk-on part in a surrealist film, Penrose often looks a little out of place in these photographs, an English gentleman among revolutionaries. "Do not judge this movement kindly..." wrote Herbert Read, introducing the International Surrealist Exhibition which Penrose and David Gascoyne organized in London in 1936. "It is defiant - the desperate act of men too profoundly convinced of the rottenness of our civilization to want to save a shred of its respectability." Yet the second half of this book makes highly respectable reading. Penrose survived the furore created by the exhibition and went on to found the Institute of Contemporary Arts after the war. He painted less and wrote more, including monographs on Picasso, Man Ray and Apollinaire. The photographs now surround him at previews, at conferences, taking ovations; found, exhibiting as it does a truly fortunate life and one dedicated to a belief in "the healing vigour of the arts".

Yet looking at the exhibition "Dada and Surrealism Reviewed" in 1978, part of which he helped select, he felt uneasy: a formerly uncomfortable art was being comfortably received. Comparing the show with the 1936 exhibition, he sensed some blunting of the sword: "the ardent desire to extend consciousness and create a society both richer in spirit and more equitable to all has become more rare. The inevitable difference between the two exhibitions was that the first came about as an urgent necessity created by a living force, whereas the second was little more than the applause of distant spectators."

"Fresh Widow"; the splintered door barring any access except the voyeuristic to the landscape of sexual delectation in "Étant Donnés". Even the snow shovel which he found in a Broadway hardware store and promoted as an art-work is inscribed as an aid to human incapacity, a mocking prosthesis: "In advance of the broken arm". Though his art is ludic, its games are not elaborations of new possibilities but - like "Fresh Widow" - logical denials, closures of vistas. His choice of chess as an avocation was psychologically right. The patterned board with its strict quota of ritualized moves, "a narrow, black-and-white one-way street" as Stefan Zweig describes it, is Duchamp's ideal habitation, a cerebral asylum.

Alice Marquis is perceptive about Duchamp's deliberate self-examination, and speculates intriguingly about his transvestite counterfeiting of his identity in the brazen figure of Rose Selavy. This alter ego allowed him to disown his physical vitality and delight in life, by transposing them to an ill-behaved harlequin. With Rose as his accomplice and surrogate, Duchamp himself could aspire to nonentity, existing in what Anais Nin thought of as a "prematurely postmortem state of complete immobility". His two marriages were conceptual ventures, parables of nullity and frustration. He tormented his first wife (who fled after the honeymoon) by sitting up all night cogitating over the chess board, and declared that he had selected her successor because she was too old to have children. "I personally never wanted to have any," he explained, "simply to keep expenses down." Sterility thus concurs with parsimony in a cruel image of that bored and depleted zero-degree condition of insensitivity to which Duchamp also sought to reduce art.

Sexual ambivalence helped drive me in on myself. Lacking flamboyance, cursed with reserve, I chose fiction, or more likely I was chosen for me, as the means of introducing to a disbelieving audience the cast of contradictory characters of which I am composed.

But *Flaws in the Glass* is not an apology *pro vide sue*: it is not written to defend any part of White's character or behaviour but rather to explain them and to reveal the forces which animate him as man and as artist. It is a cunningly reticulated network of memories, analysis and narrative, superficially arbitrary in their sequence and apparently arising from an almost random nexus of associations, but in fact profoundly composed so as to throw light forward and backward, like a torch in the night of time past and into a future whose terrifying darkness is enduringly only to those who, in growing old, have learnt the wisdom to love and to go on seeking for some kind of faith, even though they can find no established creed to command their allegiance.

Irresistible to any reader curious about the writer of the novels or in search of help in finding their deepest meaning, the book is daunting, intimidating even, to a reviewer. For it has long been plain that White is impatient of critics who wish to dissect him in the manner of anatomists with a cadaver, and of admirers whose praise may be so clumsy or underestimating as to arouse his resentment, rather than his gratitude. His sensibilities are exposed and acute, he tends to react more sharply to pain than pleasure, and he responds

By way of fiction

By Dan Davin

PATRICK WHITE:
Flaws in the Glass
A Self-Portrait
260pp. Cape. £7.95.
0 224 02924 X

Patrick White is perhaps the most considerable novelist now writing in English, and *Flaws in the Glass* is an honest and brilliantly successful attempt to tell us something new about himself, and the other two novels themselves would provide about how he came to be the man he is and the writer he is. It emerges that the writer is a sort of Hegelian synthesis created in much suffering from the contradictions in the man.

White was born in England, of wealthy parents who had themselves been brought up in both the simplicities and the complex snobberies of the late nineteenth-century Australian squatterocracy. He was at school - unhappily - first in Australia and later in England. He read French and German at Cambridge and, after returning to Australia, escaped once more to England and London. Finding himself hardly less uneasy there than he had been at home, he struggled to emancipate himself from the conventional expectations of his family and the general Australian ambience of that time. The Second World War, in which he served mainly in the Middle East as an RAF Intelligence Officer, provided only a temporary respite during his expatriate oscillations and, afterwards, he opted for Australia, drawn by his love of its landscapes rather than for any identification with its then culture or its people.

The first section, however, could stand by itself if necessary. In it, though an intensely private man - as a schoolboy, "I didn't share secrets with anybody" - and almost morbidly sensitive to any kind of intrusion, he has somehow constrained himself to write about his life, feelings, background, qualities, with the same ruthless candour that he would bring to bear on a character in one of his novels. So *Flaws in the Glass* reads as if it were his latest work of fiction, abounds in piercing portraits of real persons as the novels do in persons imagined, has that quality of moral anarchy. Still, at no other time in the Christian era would he have been able to come out so frankly:

Sexual ambivalence helped drive me in on myself. Lacking flamboyance, cursed with reserve, I chose fiction, or more likely I was chosen for me, as the means of introducing to a disbelieving audience the cast of contradictory characters of which I am composed.

It is perplexing perhaps that White has decided to take us so deeply into his confidence at all. Neither in him nor in his book is there that sort of complacency which impels so many self-portraits. It may be that he has become bored - he confesses to a low threshold of boredom, though no doubt he would disdain that phrase - with writing fiction and has felt that the time has come to tackle the most difficult of all his characters, his own, of which all the others are fragmentary projections. Or he may simply have decided that the biggest challenge to a master of the craft is to face the truth about oneself directly and tell it without self-exoneration or suppression for the sake of others.

Whatever the answer to that question, the reviewer of *Flaws in the Glass* will find that its author is always a jump ahead of him and knows his way better than any invader about his own minefield. Thus one concludes that in reading White one must always read between the lines for the richer meaning and a moment later finds him writing of "a belief contained less in what is said than the silences". Again, about to remark on the acuteness of his senses and their greater vulnerability to pain than to pleasure, one comes across "my memory began evoking smells rather than scents". Or else, "Unfortunately or not, I was given eyes, hyperactive emotions, and an unconscious apt to take over from me". Or one might be about to hint at certain evidences of vanity and one finds White writing, "Of course I am vain, less since losing my teeth than before. I watch the maw of the ships: they seem to pass be-

combatively to rash misunderstanding.

Flaws in the Glass is divided into three sections, of which the latter two are supporting panels to the main portrait. First, there is the section which gives the whole book its title. This is followed by "Journeys"; and that in its turn by "Episodes and Epitaphs". The first section contains the main substance, is the most lightly organized and, in spite of flashbacks and projections forward, presents the essence of the autobiography, the principal outlines of the portrait. It constitutes three-fifths of the whole book and the other two sections are complementary to it rather than essential.

"Journeys" is a series of vivid recollections and glimpses of the Aegean islands, Greece, the fringes of Anatolia, and Egyptian Alexandria. These places are important to White, not only because they were the backdrop to most of his wartime life but because they are the background to the family and early life of Manoly Lascaris, first met by White in Alexandria in 1941 and eventually to become the other half of a lifelong relationship, a double mandala, in which White found, for the first time and permanently, an escape from the promiscuity which so often mars the homosexual life. With Lascaris White found also the love and trust which he had long sought and which gave him the emotional security from which all his great post-war novels have come.

The third and shortest section, "Episodes and Epitaphs", is another series of brilliant pieces, this time of condensed and fiercely lit sketches of life in Australia and his relationships there.

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undercuts with typical irony its own assertion.

This irony, and its subtlety, make one wary of accepting White's statements at face value. Thus he more than once proclaims himself unable to forgive and exhibits a distressing harshness, especially about his mother, Manoly. Yet, monster though she in many ways seems to have been, there is something in the objectivity with which he presents her at her worst that nonetheless brings out her ultimate humanity and which makes one feel that at a deeper level of understanding and sensibility, the artist's level, he has forgiven her even if his memory has not.

The man who emerges, then, knows himself better than anyone else can - something which is far from true of all of us - and is able to see that his own woes are part of the common human condition. In childhood, he soon realized that he was a cuckoo in his parents' nest, a freak, a changeling, someone unable to pardon or to accept pardon, some-

Hanging out the hang-ups

By Harold Beaver

JAY LANDESMAN AND G. LEGMAN:
Neurotica, 1948-1951
The Authentic Voice of the Beat Generation
544pp. Jay Landeman. £15.
0 905150 260

Neurotica was a postwar phenomenon. The magazine ran for nine numbers from 1948 to 1951. Published in St Louis, Missouri, it moved with the fifth issue to New York. Its message to readers was this: your anxieties and hang-ups are all defensive ploys; it is society that is intolerable; it is society that is warped; it is not the individual but society that is sick; join us; we need your help; we need you to explain our neurotic culture from within. An editorial in 1949 explained:

We define neurosis as the defensive activities of normal individuals against abnormal environments. We assume that human beings are born non-neurotic, and are neuroticized later. We do not agree that it is the measure of social intelligence and psychiatric health to adapt to, and rationalize for, every evil. We do not subscribe to the psychosomatic fashion of throwing the gun on the corpse and the blame on the victim.

Neurotica was to be for the patients. In *Neurotica* American culture would hear its own authentic voice.

At least two things were new: the suggestion of mass participation by the lonely, the loony, the fetishists, or dirty mac brigade; and the adaptation of psychiatric and anthropological disciplines to mass consumption. The aim was to build a bridge between the literary magazines and the pulps, between university seminars and SoHo. It was an age of outsiders and invisible; and underground men. The great strip-show, the great coming-out party was about to begin.

It began tamely enough with poems by Kenneth Patchen, Henri Michaux (translated by Malcolm Cowley) and Leonard Bernstein. There was a clinical piece entitled "Why American Homosexuals Marry" and some touchy, tingling prose by the contributing editor, Richard Rubenstein:

I walk along the quay, beneath the low scrota moon that nudges my green corduroy coat. It is warm - the pervasive wharfandree smell mingles with the sickeningly sweet smell of my armpits. - Exhilarated, the sweat, the heat, the watery nipping of my ankles. I watch the maw of the ships: they seem to pass be-

With acceptance and experience there came at length some calm and solace. I see myself not so much a homosexual as a mind possessed by the spirit of man or woman according to actual situations or the characters. I became in my writing... I don't set myself up as an intellectual. What drives me is sensual, emotional, instinctive. At the same time I like to think creative reason reins me in as I reach the edge of disaster. These scraps and fragments from *Flaws in the Glass* only suggest something of its quality, the density of its feeling. Resisting the temptation to make a mosaic of the sayings that White expresses so profoundly, let one last quotation bring us back to the recurring motif of the title's flawed glass or the flaws in what it reveals: "... this face in the glass which has spent a lifetime searching for what it believes, but can never prove to be, the truth. A face consumed by wondering whether truth can be the worst destroyer of all."

tween my legs, touching my groin lightly...

Such surrealist *sans froid*, or "songfreud", was to mark much of the fiction. "Green armpits poetry" it was called:

Children play in her green armpits. Apart from them, she combs her hair With a vermillion comb, and weeps. She speaks to her glass childhood...

But neither the poetry nor the fiction was *Neurotica*'s strong suit. Though the subtitle to this reprint now trumpets its claim to present the "voice of the Beat Generation", the main contributors were neither beatific nor to be beatified. Nothing by Kerouac and only one little jingle by Allen Ginsberg was ever printed. "Pope my paris," sang Ginsberg, "Pop my pot/Poke my pap/Pit my plum." Not that drugs were an issue either, nor homosexuality exactly. The translation of Genet and a laudatory article in *Parisian Review* were regarded with the sourest suspicion. When the publication, *Neurotica*, of Ronald Firbank, Words like "degenerates" and "bona fide pervers" tended to fly around. Pansexualism was the name of the game, particularly in the popular arts: in comics, thrillers, graffiti, jazz. That is where the value of *Neurotica* now lies. Gershon Legman, who contributed "The Psychopathology of the Comic", an anatomy of murder mysteries, of science fiction and dirty jokes, eventually took over the editor of the ninth and final number. "With rare exceptions," he wrote,

every child in America who was six years old in 1938 has by now absorbed an absolute minimum of eighteen thousand pictorial beatings, shootings, stranglings, blood-puddles, and torturings-to-death, from comic (ha-ha) books alone, identifying himself - unless he is a complete masochist - with the heroic beater, shooter, strangler, blood-letter, and/or torturer in every case.

He listed a treasure trove of some 120 Crime Comics and 160 Love Comics on sale in the drugstores of the USA between 1937 and 1949. Often they seem interchangeable: *True Love* (formerly *Western Killers*); *My Private Life* (formerly *Murder Inc.*); *My Love Memoirs* (formerly *Women Outlaws*). A murky cartoon, mocking Kinsey, displays the "basic cause of all neurosis in father's tight-fitting jockstrap".

John del Torto contributed a piece on gambling; John Goldston, on chains and girls in knee-high boots; Marshall McLuhan, on "The Psychopathology of Time & Life"; a preview of "The Mechanical Bride". The sexuality of Wild Bill Hickok and "his Lesbian side-kick, Calamity Jane" were ridiculed; the anti-Semitism as well as the "obvious bigotry" of Superman, exposed. No holds were barred, those pre-Eisenhower years. But it was the next generation that was to reap the

harvest after literary censorship was finally abandoned (with the failure of the fuss over *Naked Lunch*, 1958-66, and *Tropic of Cancer*, 1962-64). Not only the Beats, but the confessional poets, pop lyricists like Dylan and New Journalists like Tom Wolfe, were *Neurotica*'s heirs.

Its most remarkable contribution to mass participation was a hoax such as Poe (that wily editor) would have appreciated. Among the personal small ads this spoof was planted:

STRAPPING young woman interested in works of Marquis de Sade would meet young man interested in Sacher-Masoch. State height and weight. Box 124. Replies flooded in from Dallas, the Bronx, Annapolis, Hollywood, Akron, Gary, Quebec. The largest number came from Washington, DC. G. Legman, in exposing the prank, explained:

By one of those coincidences that life is full of, though novelists now avoid them as "melodrama", one of the other classified ads in *NEUROTICA* turned out to be the perfect control. Box 119 was an ad from California "YOUNGSTER" looking for a "domineering, mature female". His forwarding address, a p.o. box, had lapsed, and his envelope of answers - it was assumed that no one could get hurt but himself if they were sent him - came back unclaimed. They were opened, dead-letter style, to find the return addresses of the "domineering, mature females" - who turned out to be (five of the six of them) the same male masochists who had answered the Strapping Young Woman. The sixth was from a female masochist.

This confusion of alternate sadist and masochist fantasies, this scrambling of male and female roles, was perfect grist to *Neurotica*'s mill. But "The Degenerates' Corner" was discontinued. Maybe they suspected post-office decoys by this time or had been approached by the police. Yet here too they were forerunners, not only of the extraordinarily widespread SM scene in America today, but of the open soliciting in high-brow literary journals like *The New York Review of Books*.

As part of their Critical Essays on American Literature series, the Boston publishers G. K. Hall have now issued *Critical Essays on Thomas Pynchon* (258pp. \$25. 0 8161 8320 1). The editor Richard Pearce has assembled more than a dozen major articles on Pynchon by critics who include Thomas Sotah, Richard Pearce and Elaine B. Safer, to which he has added fresh material by Marcus Smith and Khachig Tlostanov. The New Jerusalem: *Gravity's Rainbow*, and a critical bibliography of Pynchon criticism by Beverly Lyon Clark and Caryn Fuoroli.

The tradition of suffering

By Peter Lewis

ANATOLI RYBAKOV:
Heavy Sand
Translated from the Russian by
Harold Shukman
381pp. Allen Lane. £7.95.
0 7139 1343 6
ELIE WISSEL:
The Testament
Translated from the French by Ma-
rion Wiesel
346pp. Allen Lane. £5.95.
0 7139 1429 7

These long and important novels about Soviet Jews in the first half of this century make a fascinating and mutually illuminating pair. Both novels are strongly rooted in historical actuality, yet they are, of necessity, imaginative reconstructions of experiences which for the most part were denied expression at the time. The resemblances between the two novels are, however, superficial when compared to the major differences in viewpoint and underlying ideology. Anatoli Rybakov, a much respected Russian novelist, writes from a fundamentally pro-Soviet position, despite his criticism of some features of the system, and celebrates the Jewish community he writes about as an integral part of Soviet life. Elie Wiesel, who writes in French but now lives in the United States where he is Andrew Mellon Professor at Boston University, writes from a strongly pro-Jewish and pro-Israeli position, takes a very sceptical view of Soviet communism, and diagnoses an irreconcilable conflict between the Jew and the Communist.

In 1978 *Heavy Sand* caused a sensation in the Soviet Union when it appeared serially in three issues of the monthly *October*. Considering the very long history of Russian and Ukrainian antisemitism, Rybakov's extremely sympathetic presentation of a Jewish community in the Ukraine from the turn of the century until its extermination by the Nazis was most unusual, especially as he emphasizes the integration of the Jews into the mainstream of Soviet life after the Revolution of 1917 and the end of Tsarist containment of the Jews within the Pale. Yet what really aroused interest in the book was Rybakov's haunting documentation of the almost unimaginable suffering inflicted on the Jews by the Germans, and of the courage and heroism of the Jews in resisting their oppressors and in participating in the guerrilla war waged by Soviet partisans. From a Western point of view, it may seem odd that a work of literature dealing with the Holocaust and related themes should have come as a surprise in 1978, but Russian writers, while pouring out material about the Patriotic War of 1941-5, have shied away from the uniquely terrible Jewish experience of that time for domestic political reasons (including Stalinist and post-Stalinist antisemitism). In *Heavy Sand* Rybakov clearly sets out to right a very obvious wrong, even though this involves him in the extraordinary political contortion of countering Soviet antisemitism while apparently denying its existence in the book itself, and his didactic intention is manifest in the narrator's occasional direct address to the reader:

You don't know them? I see you're not very well informed, but then, who is? The whole thing has become an academic subject. And that's all wrong! This is a lesson of history that should be taught to schoolchildren.

The narrator, Boris Ivanovsky, looking back on the past from the vantage point of the 1970s, reconstructs the history of his family in the half-century before its almost total extermination during the Second World War, drawing on a mixture of personal family and conventional material. The narrative style is colloquial and informal, giving the impression that the narrator is speaking to the reader and trying to organize his recollections as he goes. Sometimes

he asks questions, sometimes he corrects himself. Rybakov employs this narrative intimacy skilfully to draw the reader into sympathy with what is, for his Russian audience, an unfamiliar point of view, and into seeing history through Jewish eyes.

The early part of the novel concentrates on the romantic courtship and marriage of the narrator's parents, a strangely matched yet utterly devoted pair, Jacob (Yakov) Ivanovsky, from a professional family in Switzerland which had converted to Christianity, and Rachel Rakhlenko, the daughter of a bootmaker in the Chernyov province of Russia, where they eventually settle. Rybakov then widens his scope to include a complex network of relations and friends, in order to build up a portrait of an entire provincial community against the background of a rapidly changing social, political, and economic order. Revolution, Civil War, Five Year Plans, collectivization of the kulaks, the purges of the 1930s, the Second World War: he treats a number of these events obliquely (some might say evasively), preferring to keep his main group of Jewish figures at the centre of attention, but there is nothing oblique or evasive in his handling of the Nazi persecution of the Jews. This occupies the final third of the book, and Rybakov, like his narrator, who was not an eye-witness since he was serving elsewhere with the Red Army, draws on the testimony of the few survivors. The ghetto which the Germans establish and then annihilate is typical of many in the occupied zone of the Soviet Union in 1941, and the chronicle of routine barbarity is convincing. Rybakov depicts the way in which the Nazis translated the widest

Gothic nightmares and Boschian fantasies into well-ordered mundane reality; the unthinkable became the everyday. But *Heavy Sand* is not just about passive suffering in the face of evil; it is also a tribute to Jewish heroism and self-sacrifice in impossible circumstances. Furthermore, Rybakov presents the Jewish agony as an extreme form of national suffering, again identifying the Jewish community as an integral part of the Soviet state. *Heavy Sand* may leave itself open to political criticism on some grounds, but at heart it is a profoundly humanistic novel in the great tradition of Russian literature.

While Rybakov concentrates on a representative group, Elie Wiesel in *The Testament* isolates a representative individual: Paltiel Kossover, a Jewish poet. As in *Heavy Sand*, the main narrative covers the first half of this century, but again the events of the past are viewed from the perspective of the 1970s. The historical trigger for Wiesel's novel was Stalin's horrific "liquidation" in August 1952 of all the leading Jewish writers and artists in the Soviet Union, an event shrouded in great secrecy. Since virtually no records of this extermination were kept, it is as though the Jews involved simply vanished from the face of the earth on the same day, leaving no trace of their prison experiences, interrogations, or deaths. In *The Testament*, Wiesel provides these victims of Stalin's barbarity with the voice they were deprived of.

The core of the novel is the long autobiographical testament which Paltiel Kossover is tricked into writing after his arrest, a record of his personal and political life in his early childhood in pre-Revolutionary

Russia to the time of the 1952 purge. This testament is framed by and interspersed with other material, including examples of Kossover's poetry, an explanation of how the testament itself was saved from oblivion and brought to Israel, and a treatment of the childhood of Kossover's symbolically mute son in the Soviet Union and his subsequent life in Israel in the 1970s. Wiesel establishes the Israeli context in the opening words of the book, and the sustained polarity between the Soviet Union and Israel is crucially important since it corresponds to Kossover's own loyalties and commitments as he tries to clarify his own identity.

Whereas Rybakov in *Heavy Sand* systematically plays down the importance of religion in Jewish life, Wiesel establishes the centrality of religion in the life of the Kossover family and of the Russian Jewish community into which Paltiel is born. One of his first ineradicable memories is of an antisemitic pogrom involving wholesale slaughter, destruction and desecration, and this establishes a fundamental opposition between Jews and Russians which resurfaces in the Stalinist terror in which Kossover dies. Yet much of Kossover's life is spent as a dedicated communist working on behalf of the Soviet Union. His account of how he gradually abandoned Judaism for communism is particularly intriguing, since his "conversion" is more than a transference of faith; part of the appeal of communism is that it seems to offer a short cut to the goals of Judaism itself, a radical acceleration of God's slow processes.

Kossover's nomadic existence as a wandering Jewish communist encapsulates a great deal of the European as well as the Jewish experience of his times: Berlin in the 1920s and the rise of Hitler; Paris and Palestine in the 1930s; the Stalinist purges; the Spanish Civil War, the Second World War, the Holocaust. But running parallel with historical and political events are Kossover's inner crises as he has doubts about his acquired faith, only to paper over the cracks again and again in order to give the crumbling structure the semblance of stability. What he finally recognizes is that he has committed himself to "spilt religion" (to use T. E. Hulme's definition of romanticism), and has betrayed his Jewishness and his true self. His testament, a posthumous reassertion of the faith of his youth. Faced with death, he finds himself. Wiesel's novel contains tragedy, but finally transcends the tragic in its affirmation of new possibilities: Kossover's testament records the past, but also points to the future, to the Promised Land.

Winter's Tales 27, edited by Edward Leeson (189pp. Macmillan. £5.95. 0 333 31072 1) contains stories by new and established writers: "Letting the Birds Go Free" by Philip Oakes; "Things" by V.S. Pritchett; "Old Tom" by Celia Dale; "Flora's Lane Duck" by Harold Acton; "Safe Wintering" by Terence Wheeler; "The Indian Girl" by Giles Gordon; "A Mouthful of Gold" ("macabre and surprising") by John Brunner; "Home Ownership" by Murray Ball; "Chemistry" by Graham Swift; "Egnaro" by M. John Harrison; "Birth-day" by Fay Weldon; and "Christmas with a Stranger" (a "hilarious and touching fairy-tale") by Leslie Thomas.

dominates the Kafka novels. But Appelfeld is more likely to have taken this from personal experience of a persecution Kafka was spared. He has one significant advantage over Kafka: there is in his writing no sign of hysteria. The last sentence of *Badenheim 1939* explodes with a controlled power Kafka never achieves. Appelfeld seems closer in his exaustion to Isaac Babel, another writer whose experience of torment was more than mental.

Thomas Mann claimed that by writing *Death in Venice* he pointed in advance to the outbreak of the First World War. The general disintegration was made particular. The people of *Badenheim 1939* are rooted in their own time and place. We know about the Jews, we know about the Nazis. But this story could be about another time, another place. All pogroms, all the terror of enduring persecutions seem to unroll in this simple narrative about the arrival of doom. This is an extraordinarily beautiful and sad book.

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Tander who is in love with Vera (both of them have rooms in the same house as Tander); and Krister, an old man for whom no one seems to have any use. Tander becomes infatuated with Vera, whom he adopts as a symbol of purity. Vera stands between piles of soiled laundry and the bleached sheets flapping in the wind and appears to Tander as one who has never been, and never will be, soiled. Hence, his profound hatred of Jan Vang, who loves (and is loved by) Vera. Tander, intending to kill Vang and so protect his fantasy, introduces a palpable sense of evil into the quiet village.

In one sense, the novel is an essay on the evil which can result from lack of understanding among people obliged to live together. Tander's wife has an intuitive grasp of his obsession with Vera, and thinks she might jolt him out of his silent brooding by writing on a village wall under cover of darkness, "NOBODY CARES FOR JOHAN TANDER". Tander assumes this to be the work of Vang, whom he proposes to kill

that evening, announcing his intention to Vang the same afternoon. Meanwhile Krister is drawn to the bleaching yard, sensing that this evening he too will die. He would like a clean white shirt, but none of the villagers will oblige him. Krister, in his need, turns to Tander, who repulses him.

Tander also discovers that his wife was responsible for the writing on the wall. This comes as a revelation: Tander rescues himself from hatred, and seeks to explain himself to Vang and Vera. Vang and his friends, meanwhile, have banded together against Tander, and, fortified by a bottle of wine, they frog-march him to his death in the laundry.

Read as myth or fable, the events in the bleaching yard, and the novel as a whole, are an exploration of salvation in a social context; their tragic power lies in the frustration of individual efforts towards redemption. Vang's implied resolution seems to be a variation on the Great Commandment: if you cannot love your neighbour, at least be generous.

They might remain sceptical about Steven Bauer's *Saturday*, however, in which the moon is plucked from her orbit and falls victim to the evil powers of a giant megalomaniac owl who wants to cover the world with darkness. We meet a satyr called Matthew, a boy called Derin, a navel called Deirdre and a magic sword called Vera. Matthew is a satyr more for his hirsute appearance than his moral nature, and has no other powers than his hunger for grain nicely balanced by the US's desire to strengthen the dollar with gold. The second is big business, with James Collington battling to wrest control of gigantic multinational SAGOMI from the African-er faction headed by his father-in-law. The two are cunningly interwoven, but business comes off best, with sharp, clearly focussed detail contrasting to the fuzziness of the rest of the action. Characters are usual soap-opera quality, but the whole grips satisfactorily, for as long as it takes to read.

Life on the margins

By Philip Thody

HERVÉ BAZIN:
L'Église verte
284pp. Paris: Seuil.
2 02 006008 6

In his 1962 study of Hervé Bazin, Jean Anglade described *Au nom du fils* as "un roman si français qu'on pourrait le lire". Bazin's latest novel, *L'Église verte*, shows that it is his themes as well as the richness and variety of his language which make his world so quintessentially French. The trilogy with which his name will always be associated - *Yvère au poing*, *La mort du petit cheval*, *Le cri de la chouette* - is not only indissolubly linked to the French notion of the family, it is also inseparable from the peculiarly backward region in the West of France in which Bazin was brought up; while the problem which lies at the centre of *L'Église verte* is one which not even our membership of the European Community has made very acute to free-born Englishmen.

Yet it is clearly one which worries the French, *et pour cause*. Indeed, I used to think when I first went there that nobody in France could remember who they were for more than ten minutes, which was why everyone carried a piece of cardboard with their photograph and *état-civil* on it:

they wanted to be able to fish it out of their pocket for a surreptitious glance every now and then as reassurance that they had not changed. But this interpretation of the continental obsession with identity-cards rapidly vanished when I discovered that you couldn't even draw money out of the bank without proving to somebody else who you were, and I agree with the retired schoolteacher, Jean-Luc Godion, the narrator of *L'Église verte*, that there are nowadays immense dangers in living in

notre monde ultra-identificateur où, grâce à l'ordinateur, l'acte de naissance ou de mariage, le casier, le livret militaire, le permis de conduire risquent d'être connectés avec notre dossier médical, familial, fiscal, scolaire, bancaire et, pourquoi pas? politique. . . .

It is not that Bazin expects these dangers to go away. The celebration of untamed nature which runs through *L'Église verte* is accompanied by a recognition that the bulldozer will put an end even to the marshlands of the West. Ecology, as Godion implicitly acknowledges by the description of how the countryside round him changes in less than a year, is bound to be a lost cause, however noble and justified a one. The anecdote around which the arguments in *L'Église verte* are constructed is far more the account of a defeat than is the plot of any other Bazin novel.

Sixty-four-year-old Godion, wandering through the wild woods one day with his divorced daughter Claire, sees a naked man breaking his last links with civilization by throwing away his wrist-watch. A few days later, the handsome stranger is accidentally shot in the leg by one of the hunters who mistook the region, and is taken to hospital. But he has no identity papers and refuses to tell anybody who he is, so that Godion earns himself some unpopularity by letting him stay in his house when he is discharged. Claire, however, thinks it a good idea, and becomes the *bel inconnu*'s mistress. When a determined detective eventually discovers who he is, the stranger takes off again on the 12.30 bus.

L'Église verte differs from Bazin's other novels in having no conflict between the characters, since Godion (a widower) doesn't mind his daughter being liberated so long as she doesn't leave home. All three are trying to live as far as possible on the margin of society (Claire runs her own book-binding business). It is a blatantly committed novel, the equivalent in fiction of Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring*. It is also a novel for lexicographers and gourmets. Did you know, for example, that *un scops* was a dwarf owl, that *l'écussonnage* was shield-grafting (for trees) and that you should choose *des Belle de Fontenay* for pommes de terre suées, leaving les *binjies* for *purée* and les *Viola* for *ragoûts*?

Defective spells

By Richard Brown

LINDA HALDEMAN:
The Lastborn of Elvinwood
237pp. 0 285 62503 9
STEVEN BAUER:
Saturday
211pp. 0 285 62502 0
Souvenir Press. £6.95 each.

In *The Lastborn of Elvinwood* a Surrey small-town actor, Ian James, obeys a mysterious compulsion to follow the Vicar and Mrs Hubbard into the woods one night. He witnesses an assignation between this odd couple, shrunk down to microchip size, local estate agent Miss Crawley, and the fairy King and Queen who are all meeting to discuss the decreasing numbers and stature of the "little people". Ian is forced to help them change their reproductive fortunes for the better by exchanging one of their supernumerary moles for a human baby girl. The Vicar, an *aficionado* of the black arts, drives him down to Cornwall where they meet an "Old Master" of magic who gives them a spell which will accomplish the kidnapping transformation. But the spell is defective and the terrified fairies dare not complain. Only Ian, who has by now developed a taste for declaiming the mumbo-jumbo and who thirsts for the "powers", has the courage to try to tackle the old magician and put things to rights. Readers who are inclined to be sceptical about all this are informed by the sleeve-notes that Mr Haldeман has lived in England "for a year" and has researched in the University of Pennsylvania Library. So it must all be true.

In fact, it's sheer embarrassment for Detective-Inspector Perry Trethowan, when his father is found dead on a do-it-yourself strappado machine wearing a pair of spangled tights and he has to confront the appalling gaggle of eccentrics that make up his family. Extremely amusing, witty and ingenious, but possibly a little lightweight.

JONATHAN EVANS:
The Midas Men
314pp. Michael Joseph. £7.50.
0 7181 2043 4

Two books for the price of one here. The first is international politics, with the Soviet Union's hunger for grain nicely balanced by the US's desire to strengthen the dollar with gold. The second is big business, with James Collington battling to wrest control of gigantic multinational SAGOMI from the African-er faction headed by his father-in-law. The two are cunningly interwoven, but business comes off best, with sharp, clearly focussed detail contrasting to the fuzziness of the rest of the action. Characters are usual soap-opera quality, but the whole grips satisfactorily, for as long as it takes to read.

stabbing beaks of his corps of erst-while trusted falcons.

But the evil owl is not the only pernicious bird who presides here. As in Ms Haldeман's book, we feel ourselves to be under the unmistakable tyranny of the great and very probably crested porcupine. Both books are unmitigated fantasies, questionable as entertainment for children and rather disturbing when dressed up, as they are here, for an adult audience. They only make sense if we take the imagination to be at its strongest when it is not restrained by any meaningful contact with observable reality. But even then it is not the imaginativeness of these books that is striking so much as the drab conventionality of their landscape of fancy. Placed beside them *The Hobbit* would seem a *Middlemarch* of verisimilitude and

Watership Down as grand as *War and Peace*.

In *The Lastborn of Elvinwood* there is at least an appropriate ambience of levity, but in *Saturday* the cloying fantasy serves as a vehicle for a pious and self-fulfilling moral message which proclaims, as if this were remarkable, that an unspecified, abstract "good" is better than and will triumph over an equally unspecified and abstract "evil". There may be readers who can tolerate, or even luxuriate in, this cosy dream-world, but it is not so clear that they would not be better off without it. Enterprising academics may find material here for literary psychoanalysis and subtle sociologizing but, stranded on a desert island, with nothing else by way of reading matter to beguile the time, these books would probably be most useful in lighting the fire.

Criminal proceedings

ROBERT BARNARD:
Sheer Torture
186pp. Collins. £6.25.
0 00 231871 7

In fact, it's sheer embarrassment for Detective-Inspector Perry Trethowan, when his father is found dead on a do-it-yourself strappado machine wearing a pair of spangled tights and he has to confront the appalling gaggle of eccentrics that make up his family. Extremely amusing, witty and ingenious, but possibly a little lightweight.

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TIMOTHY HOLME:
A Funeral of Gondolas
223pp. Macmillan. £5.95.
0 333 31838 2

In this second book about Inspector Peroni, that anglophile Neapolitan, the author has transferred his hero - known not without cause as the Rudolph Valentino of the Italian police - eastwards across the plain from Verona to Venice. Here he becomes involved in a quintessential Venetian intrigue, encompassing illegal betting on gondola races, pimping, robbery, murder and the works of Goldoni. This is a much tighter, better constructed book than Timothy Holme's first novel, and he has filled it with an effective gallery of Venetian grotesques.

VICTOR CANNING:
The Boy on Platform One
177pp. Heinemann. £6.95.
0 434 10796 4

Young Peter Courtney has an amazing memory; together with his father gives demonstrations of his abilities; comes to the attention of an intelligence department; and gets caught up in an espionage operation. A pleasant, uncomplicated story: Victor Canning is writing well within himself, but even at half-speed there are not many who can keep up with him.

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